LIFESTYLE / D1

Pinoy arts, crafts fight back against global competitors

BUSINESS / B1

UK credit watchdog says RP banking system remains weak

SPORTS / A31

'Boy Samson' Luat beats Taiwanese, nails Kaohsiung 9-ball title

ENTERTAINMENT / F1

ABC 5 confirms talent 'piracy'

Lobbyist tells how he bribed US lawmakers

WASHINGTON—At 1:00, Brent H. Wilkes rented a suite at the Ritz that a few blocks from the Capitol. In his briefcase was a stack of envelopes for six congressmen, each packet containing up to $10,000

LOBBYIST, A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, August 7, 2006 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 340 P18 www.inq7.net

Primer on effective whistle-blowing out

By Norman Bordadora

A STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE IBON JOURNAL and Jesuits in the Philippines shows Filipinos who blow the whistle on corruption prefer to press on against the wrongdoers despite professional and social difficulties the exercise entails.

The executive report of focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted by the Ibon Journal

PRIMER, A6

Filipino refugees swell

Coast Guard to send 2 ships to help in evacuation

By Nikko Dizon, Christine O. Avendaño and Leila B. Salaverria

A DAY AFTER ISRAEL launched its heaviest bombardment against Hezbollah fighters, hundreds of frightened Filipino workers yesterday scampered to a Beirut church to await evacuation, as Philippine teams stepped up house-to-house searches and made phone calls to persuade other compatriots to leave, officials said.

In some cases, Lebanese employers slammed the phones down or told callers there were no Filipinos working in their homes, one diplomat at the scene told the Inquirer.

The relentless war continued with frantic calls from their families in the Philippines driven up to 700 more Filipinos to seek refuge at the Church of the Maronite Monks in Beirut, before their evacuation out of the embattled Arab country.

"The bombings prompted the upsurge in OFWs fleeing to the relocation center, partly because of the pressure from their parents and relatives to leave Lebanon, telling them of the President's [evacuation] order," said the diplomat, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

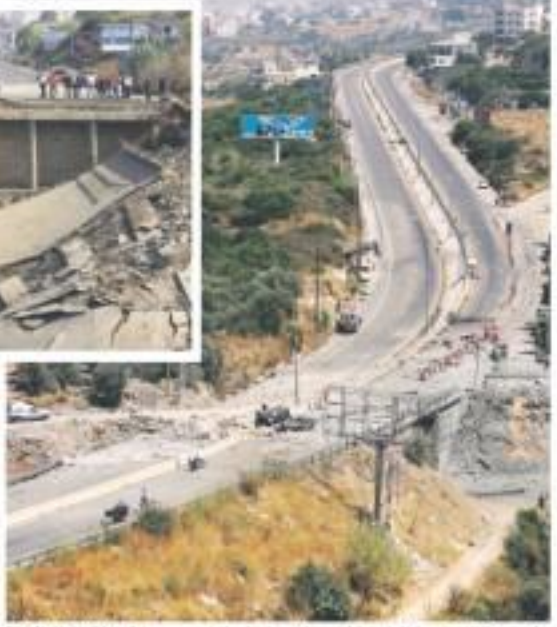
As the evacuation task force intensified its campaign to bring home, if possible, all of the estimated 30,000 overseas Filipino workers, President Macapagal-Arroyo appealed to Israeli and Hezbollah forces to spare fleeing Filipinos and other foreign convoys from attack.

"The Philippines joins the international community in calling on the parties in

FILIPINOS, A13

BRIDGE TO NOWHERE. Lebanese citizens gather at the destroyed bridge of Halat, which links Beirut to the northern areas.

GETAWAY BUS. Filipino workers flee Beirut in a 53-seat bus chartered by the Philippine Embassy at a cost of $1,200.



TROUBLED EXIT. Israel's incessant aerial bombardment damaged the main highway linking Beirut and northern Lebanon at the bridge of Madfoun.

UN ceasefire resolution spurs heavier fighting

BEIRUT, LEBANON—ISRAEL AND THE Hezbollah have sharply intensified their fight with punishing air strikes, waves of rocket attacks and brutal ground fighting—in an apparent bid to inflict maximum mutual damage in the few days remaining before a draft UN ceasefire resolution takes hold.

Hezbollah guerrillas fired in succession barrages of rockets at towns across northern Israel on Sunday, killing 30 people in the worst rocket attack on Israel since the violence began July 12. Nine of those killed were reserve soldiers.

"This was the most difficult thing I could have imagined in my career. There are nine bodies here covered in blankets, around us cars are going up in flames," Army Radio reporter Yinon Hirsh said at the shaked back town. "On one side is the resistance, on the other side are the nine young bodies awaiting for burial."

Early Sunday, the Israeli Army broadcasted its offensive to attack positions of a Palestinian group in Lebanon. Warplanes bombed at least two camps of the Syrian-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, but no casualties were reported in either raid.

On Saturday night, jets also fired missiles that killed five people in two houses in the village of Aynata, near the southern border town of Nabatiyeh, witnesses and Arab media said.

Al-Jazeera television reported three people dead in Shqoura, on the Mediterranean coast side of Lebanon's border with Israel.

Three people died in overnight bombing in Al-Hibbariy, about 4 km from the Israeli border. Civil defense officials also said they received calls from the village

UN CEASEFIRE, A13

Taxi operators' earnings fall as gas prices rise

By Dustin L. Luces
Business

DRIVERS ON WHOM DOING THE talking, taxi operators nowadays are either making a killing, or are being killed. Being killed by the high cost of petroleum products, that is.

The industry is reeling from the almost weekly increases in the price of gasoline brought about by the tension in the Middle East and supply disruptions in other parts of the world, according to the Philippine National Taxi Operators Association (PNTOA).

"Taxi operators are being hit hard," said Rony Santos, head of the PNTOA that also serves as the industry's lobby group. "Almost every week, we experience price hikes."

Because taxi fares are regulated by the government, operators have been unable to raise their rates to keep up with the steady increase in fuel prices and maintenance costs.

Last year, the PNTOA asked the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) to grant it an increase in the "flag-down" rate, but the regulator turned the down, arguing that taxi operators continued to make money despite rising fuel prices.

"The last fare increase they granted us was in 2004, when the price of gasoline was still at P24 [per liter]." Santos pointed out. "Now [the price of gasoline] is almost double that and they still refuse to

TAXIS, A6

SPECIAL REPORT

LPG BOOST. A gas station attendant fills up a taxicab, which runs on liquefied petroleum gas (tank mounted in the trunk) in Makati City. NEIL DAYAO

US lawyers' group cites Davide

HONOLULU—FORMER PHILIPPINE Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. and US Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy have received International Rule of Law awards from the American Bar Association.

Davide on Saturday called the award his "greatest gift from the legal profession."

Kennedy said he accepted it with the understanding that there was still much to be done to promote the rule of law around the world.

Both Davide and Kennedy were honored at the ABA's national convention here—Davide for his work in election and legal reform in the Philippines and Kennedy for his work promoting the rule of law abroad.

Kennedy, who has been on the US high court since he was appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1988, has spent summers in Austria, teaching international and American law at the University of Salzburg. He also has been active in international judicial conferences.

Born on July 23, 1936, in Sacramento, California, he received his bachelor's de-

US LAWYERS, A6

Elites bid to seal nation's fate in secret dialogues

By Amando Doronila

ON JULY 20-21, THE PATH OF THE NATION came up in a secret workshop at the Ramon Magsaysay Center on Roxas Boulevard by an exclusive group of the nation's elite. No more than 50 representatives of the political sector, the business community, the Catholic Church, the NGOs and eminent civic leaders were present.

The press was barred and the participants were bound to a pledge of secrecy that approached that of papal conclaves; the proceedings of the Holy Inquisition; and the rites of the Ku Klux Klan, Masonic Lodges, the Rosicrucians Order of the 17th century, and the Mafia.

Stripping the workshop of its mystique, it was essentially setting an agenda for the nation and defining key national issues—tasks that ought to be the responsibility of government, elected representatives, political parties, NGOs and sectoral groups (including trade unions and peasant organizations) putting their heads together to reach an open covenant or social pact "openly arrived at." People's organizations were conspicuously underrepresented in the list.

ANALYSIS

This mania for secrecy is an indelible part of political developments. The fact that secret dialogues/workshops are initiated by the elite is the latest manifestation of its tendency to dominate the economic, political and social agenda of the nation through the exclusion of the poorer sectoral classes from its conclaves.

The dialogue at the Ramon Magsaysay Center followed closely a secret "think tank" discussion initiated by former Pres-

ELITES, A4

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Gordon pushes Owwa fund probe

Asks GMA to let officials testify in Senate

IN A BID TO AVERT ANOTHER MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL clash, Sen. Richard Gordon has appealed to President Macapagal Arroyo to let executive branch officials face the Senate inquiry today into the alleged Overseas Workers Welfare Administration fund mess.

Otherwise, those officials, who snubbed the first hearing on July 31, could run the risk of being cited in contempt, or worse, being charged in court for defying committee inquiries, Gordon yesterday.

"It's requesting Malacañang to send them and stay away from making it appear that they don't want to cooperate because the Senate is bad," Gordon, who lifted the resolution pending in the Senate, told the government's prosecutors to eventually file charges against the officials.

Another clash by these officials, he warned, would weaken not only the Senate, but Malacañang as well.

"Both institutions will lose. The executive, the President, will appear as if she's hiding something and the people will be less educated about what the Senate's job is, which is to craft legislation, and to investigate how money is used and how laws are being enforced," he said.

"The Senate could cite them in contempt or file suit against them for culpable violation of the Constitution," Gordon said, when asked about the Senate's options in case of another snub, stressing that the law requires the presence of officials in inquiries in aid of legislation.

The Supreme Court had declared as unconstitutional the gag on officials in Executive Order No. 464 which had protected the officials from testifying in Senate hearings without authorization from Ms Arroyo.

Subpoenas issued

The investigating labor committee had issued subpoenas to Owwa chief Marianito Roque, Labor Secretary Arturo Brion, Foreign Undersecretary Esteban Conejos, Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration chief Rosalinda Baldoz.

But Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita has indicated the officials will skip today the hearing set for 1 p.m. today unless they hear from the executive or the contested 30,000 Filipino workers from the besieged Middle East country.

The Senate opened the inquiry last week amid reports that the government's slow pro-active approach in evacuating the distressed workers was an offshoot of what the country's envoy in Lebanon claimed was a shortage of funds.

Owwa funds were believed to have been diverted to other purposes in the run-up to the May 2004 presidential vote—a charge denied by Owwa.

Joker 's call

On Sunday, Sen. Joker Arroyo called for a definement of the Senate hearing.

"First things first. Let's concentrate on evacuating and bringing out the workers in safety first, after that our eats go and investigate where the Owwa funds are," Arroyo told the lawyers.

"We cannot afford another confrontation between the lives and the silence at this time. It would not do the DFWs, and the country, any good," Arroyo said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who is making a more thorough audit of the Owwa funds under Miguel's watch, said the Senate, by a consensus, could file contempt charges against those officials if they skipped today's hearing.

"Let's see if Executive Secretary Ermita would go to jail for them," he said in an interview on radio dzBB.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, chair of the labor committee, had earlier warned survey surprises he feared against officials who would defend the subpoenas. "They have no reason not to appear again," he said in an interview.

What status?

Estrada wrote Ermita this week stating there were several proposed bills related to Gordon's introduction to oversee the executive secretary's stance that there was no need to issue more bills to circumvent the inquiry in the invitation, the team reasons cited by the officials for skipping the first hearing.

In his Aug. 2 letter, the senator said that while Congress wasn't required to issue any law "possible needed mandate" for its inquiries, he was providing Ermita with a partial list of legislation if only to see the inquiry through.

He mentioned his own bill, titled "An act to institute policies and increase employment and establish a higher standard of governance and promotion of the welfare of migrant workers," and several other pieces of legislation.

Ermita, however, rejected Gordon's contention that the officials he furnished advisory questions, asserting that this applied only to the Question Hour, where invited officials have the privilege of choosing the questions to be asked.

Texters using Lebanon crisis to rile RP Muslims

A GROUP OF MUSLIM RADICALS is circulating a text message purportedly warning that Israel has assembled 400 rockets to destroy the Kaaba in Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca, one of the Islamic world's most venerated shrines.

If you never receive this text message, ignore it, said Yahya Basman, leader of the Center for Moderate Muslims (CMM). Basman said radicals were apparently spreading Filipino Muslims into violent hysteria over the conflict between Israel and the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

"This is bad. They are taking advantage of the volatile situation," Basman told the Inquirer.

He said the 400 rockets—"Israel prepared it to strike nuclear missiles to destroy Kaaba. Please pass to all Muslims"—began circulating among local Muslims late last week. On Saturday alone, he said he received the message at least 10 times.

Basman said he has received reports because the propaganda was using the Kaaba—the cube-shaped structure in Mecca considered as one of the holiest places in Islam—as a rallying point to incite violence against Israel.

He feared that such agitations might create a more serious problem than the one generated by the publication of Muhammad cartoons in the west-ern press several months ago.

"We believe in the sensitivity of Filipino Muslims who are practically emotionally ... instinctive," said the former University of the Philippines professor.

Basman said it was very unlikely that Israel would do something as stupid and disgraceful as attacking the Kaaba which contains the "Black Stone," generally considered a meteorite by scientists.

"Israel wouldn't do that. They would never want the entire Muslim world to be their enemy," he said.

Alarmed by the possibility of a major conflagration erupting on the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, the CMM, a nationwide organization of around 10,000 Muslims, has been conducting forums to educate the public on the Middle East crisis.

Basman said they established three years ago in response to the widespread misimpression that Muslims were terrorists. The line then was heavily manifested in saturation drives conducted in Muslim communities wherever police encounter lacking the requisite documents. Christian Vi Esguerra

'Hand of steel' to crush terror, vows Palace

MALACAÑANG VOWED YESTERDAY TO continue to use the "hand of steel" in finding out terror groups like the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah.

"President [Macapagal-] Arroyo commands the Armed Forces for gaining ground and pushing ahead with its offensive against terror," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said, reacting to the capture by the military the other day of a suspected terrorist training camp in Barangay Kauy, Indanan town, in Sulu.

The camp, located in the foothills of Mt. Bud Kapot, had fortified bunkers, ground shelters and shooting ranges but was believed to have been used by the Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah [illegible].

"The government has stated routine after routine in the campaign against terrorism and we shall continue to use the hand of steel following out the network of," Bunye said in a statement.

He said the government's fight against terror was a "strategic campaign to support the global coalition and to serve our own political and economic security."

He reiterated the Palace call for Congress to pass the anti-terror bill to "further streamline the movement of terrorist arms, funds and personnel across communities and borders, and to nip the threat in the bud without need for massive military operations."

The military has identified a major offensive in Sulu to finally neutralize or capture Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah leaders Umar Patek and Dulmatin. The fighting has cost the lives of some soldiers and terror group members but the leaders continue to be elusive. Christine O. Avendaño

Lava spreads on Mt. Mayon

LEGAZPI CITY—LAVA FROM MT. MAYON spilled into Bonga gully and spread to other gullies facing Barangay Miisi in Daraga and Barangay Bayasan in this city, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said yesterday.

The lava flows were current-free and were southeast-northeast of the volcano, Phivolcs said.

The lava front at the Mabinit Channel has breached the 6-km permanent danger zone by about 1.08 meters while the lava flowing in the direction of Bonga gully was 5.1 kilometers from the volcano's crater.

Phivolcs recorded incidents of lahar-type flood within 8 kilometers of the crater in the southeast sector, particularly in the areas of Daraga and Sto. Domingo and this city, in October and before early yesterday (Filipino's saturday) mediation.

The change in the direction of the lava flow to Bonga gully slowed its progress toward the Mabinit Channel, rendering it unlikely beyond the 6-km permanent danger zone, Phivolcs added.

The agency continued to remind residents and sightseers to keep a safe distance from the volcano because the lava flow could cause pyroclastic avalanches and flows.

Today's seismic activity in Mayon included 37 [illegible] volcanic earthquakes and [illegible] rockfall [illegible] Jerome Aning

Pastor's widow says dead soldier leader of husband's killers

By Jun Escandor Jr.
PhilStar Northern Luzon Bureau

BABADA, ALBAY—THE WIDOW of slain pastor Isidro Sto. Rosa urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to call for a speedy solution of his killing amid growing evidence pointing to soldiers as the suspects.

Imelda Sto. Rosa identified Cpl. Lodger Pedrano of the Philippine Army, the other dead man found by a creek beside her husband, as the one who was barking orders to the group of hooded armed men on Thursday night.

Isidro, a pastor of the United Methodist Church, was shot dead by some 10 armed men outside his home in the village of Binitinan-gubyan on the night of Aug. 3.

"I believe my husband, who knew self-defense, was able to fight back and grabbed Pedrano's rifle and was able to shoot him before he was killed," Imelda said.

She said her husband's wristwatch was found in the pocket of Pedrano together with an outer of T-shirt in camo dated July 22, 2006.

Brig. Gen. Antonio Colcoco, 9th Infantry Brigade commander based in Villahermosa Sur, assured the slain pastor's wife of his charges will be properly solved.

"It is our responsibility and the local soldier accused killing himself suppose lawyers, the administrative office of the 9th Infantry Division is already undertaking an investigation of the case and let's just wait for the result," Arroyo said.

The 9IDCB is under the 9th Infantry Division.

Imelda said she feared for her safety because suspicious-looking persons were once near his home since the stoke last Friday.

She told a team visited her previously, introduced himself as a friend of the slain pastor and told her to turn her say if she was able to identify Pedrano as one of the hooded armed men.

Imelda said she told the team, whom she believed was a soldier, that she knew all of her husband's friends and the stoke Dina have become to be associated with her husband.

She said the man, who did not give his name, left after she refused to talk to him.

Imelda said the military had been sowing disinformation by saying that Pedrano was a cadet of her daughter.

She told the newly identified Pedrano informant he was that only one among the hooded armed men who was slain and unarmed. The others were leader and fled.

Imelda said the men who ransacked her house and abducted and killed her husband were not able to retrieve Pedrano's body because vigilantes quickly rushed to the place where the shooting took place.

She said that upon hearing the gunfire she rushed to her sister's house where the latter's husband came out and drove a tricycle around the village shouting that her brother-in-law had been shattered.

Imelda said the villagers responded and immediately went to the place where the bodies of her husband and Pedrano were found.

Isidro had been a pastor and a member of the Kilusang Mayobrehid ng Bayol, an affiliate of the militant Kilusang Mayobrehid ng Pilipinas, since 1994.

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US lawyers' group cites Davide

To page A2

gan from Stanford University and the London School of Economics, and his law degree from Harvard Law School.

Davide, the first Filipino judicial figure to receive the ABA International award, joined the ABA for 4 efforts to promote justice, freedom and democracy around the world.

He said it worked unceasingly to advance the rule of law and to improve legal systems, especially in developing countries.

Prior to membership of 1.08 lawyers when it was founded in 1878 in New York, the ABA now boasts of 400,000 members all over the United States. Its current mission is "to be the national representative of the legal profession."

Davide was appointed presidential adviser on electoral reform by President Macapagal-Arroyo in January, shortly after he retired from the Supreme Court. He had been in the court since 1999, and became Chief Justice in 1998.

The Philippine Supreme Court is perceived after that of the United States, which reinstated the Philippines in the late 19th century and gave it its independence in 1946.

Davide headed the Commission on Elections from February 1988 to January 1990 and was responsible for setting the agency's rules of procedure.

A few months after his appointment as presidential adviser on electoral reforms, Davide submitted to Ms Arroyo a list of recommended poll reforms. These included:

- Fixing at four years the terms of office of members of the House of Representatives, as well as provincial, city and municipal officials.
- Banning the appointment of elective local officials and members of the House to any public office during their term, and the appointment of senators to any public office within three years from election.
- Despite banning elections, which entails the holding of national and local elections on different dates.
- Banning political dynasties.
- Prohibiting officials from switching parties in the middle of their terms.
- Making the prosecution of these kinds of crimes easier.
- Stopping stiffer penalties for election offenders.

Political dynasties

Davide said some of his recommendations included proposals he had submitted to the 1971 Constitutional Convention (Concon) and to the 1986 Constitutional Commission (Concom), particularly on political dynasties and negotiations.

He was a member of both the Concon and the Concom.

Davide was born on Dec. 30, 1931, in Argao, Cebu. He graduated from the University of the Philippines College of Law, and taught at Southwestern University in Cebu. With reports from Inquirer Research

DAVIDE: ABA award is the "greatest gift from the legal profession."

Elites bid to seal nation's fate in secret dialogues

To page A2

Silent Point: Names among his fellow who, it was revealed by one participant, drew up a short list of the next leaders of the country in the post-Arroyo period.

Format betrays bias

The dialogue, the Fonacier deck said, and similar undertakings have some elements in common. Their participants are outwardly selected by consensus who have appointed themselves as saviors, defining the key issues of the national agenda and circumventing who would participate, thus betraying their decisions only to issues that matter to the elite.

Even the format of the dialogue betrays elitist bias. Despite the secrecy, enough material has leaked to the press to give the public an idea of what the dialogue was all about.

For example, it has been reported that the workshop was initiated by people identified with the Arroyo administration, among them former Ambassador to the Vatican Howard Dee and former tigerlan Secretary Simeon Gaellan, who was one of the moderators, from the think tankers of Management.

Whatever purpose the workshop may have served the administration, the most important point is that, according to one of the documents obtained by the press, the goal was "to gather people of influence and show that the Philippines is not a hopeless case."

A conference report said: "Despite the differences, we were able to show that the country is resilient, that we still have the sense of brotherhood."

The dialogue followed the lecture of high personnel, PowerPoints by such international confidences, such as the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, as well as those run by ABS. It had an internationally renowned facilitator: Adam Kahane of Generative Consulting and of the Global Leadership Initiative. He reminded participants to "listen and not to argue."

Participants

The list of some 30 participants drew a cross-section of the national elite, including administration officials (who were a large representation), Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines; Sen. Manuel Roxas II; Washington Sycip; two representatives from Mindanao groups; former Sec. Wigberto Tañada, two party-list representatives; former University of the Philippines president Ze. Jose Abueva; Christian Monsod of the Ours Voice movement; and, to give a semblance of opposition balance, two members of the Cabinet Gang of Ten who halted the Arroyo administration in July 2005.

From this composition, it is not surprising that the workshop narrowed the country's key areas to five—education and moral values, peace and social justice, livelihood, and resource generation for infrastructure and social projects, and legitimacy.

Predictably, the workshop's results is a bitch well in the legitimacy issue which sparked a controversial debate.

One anti-Arroyo participant said: "We can't tackle the rest of the issues until we settle the legitimacy issue first."

This formed the group to adopt a workshop on this issue alone on Aug. 17, promising to lead it to what the bishops termed in their last pastoral letter as an "unproductive exercise."

Bishops being used

Based on the proceedings of July 30-31, it was not surprising that the bishops representatives were reported as be considering withdrawing from the dialogue because they were beginning to feel that they were being used to legitimize the workshop.

The bishops' suspicions were aroused by a draft of statement that was intended to be signed by Archbishop Lagdameo (he didn't sign it).

The draft obtained by the Inquirer, quoted Lagdameo as saying that "the position of representatives from government is that legitimacy is a constraint; but a significant number of participants believed the reality that legitimacy is an issue that needs closure."

Expect fireworks on this on Aug. 17. But whatever pyrotechnics will happen should not make us overlook the main point of this article—that the workshop is a self-appointed elitist exercise, in search of solutions defined by elite interests.

Correction

A STORY "80 hospitals rank is on medical tourism" on Page A1 of the July 31 issue misnamed the name of one of the hospitals participating in the Philippine Medical Tourism Program in Las Piñas. The hospital is the Las Piñas Doctors Hospital, not Las Piñas Medical Center.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Editor, The Philippine Daily Inquirer #40 Railroad cor. Industry Sts., Port Area, Manila (fax Nos. 896-6214 loc. 2214 or 896-2417; e-mail address: dailyinq@inquirer.com.ph).

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MONDAY, AUGUST 7, 2006

A 5

Inquirer names '06-'08 scholars

FIVE JUNIORS (U) THE UNIVERSITY OF THE Philippines' College of Mass Communication and one each from the University of Sto. Tomas and University of the East are the Inquirer University Scholars for school years 2006-2008. Alexandra D. Fernandez, Philippine Daily Inquirer president, announced yesterday.

Aside from grasping their tuition and other fees, the Inquirer will give the scholars a monthly stipend and an allowance for books and school supplies.

The scholars are Penelope Jake B. Endozo, Jessica Anne D. Clemeno, Kristine Jellica C. Mangosing, Ibrahim Joel P. Mercado (U) and Joan Avalon A. Tolentino (U); Shelly Beara C. Dimaculangan of UST and John A. Bonano of UE.

They are required to keep no grade below 2.00 or 86 and will intern at the Inquirer during vacations, which would be credited to their practicum. On graduating, they may work at the Inquirer for at least one year.

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JUNNI

JG SUMMIT QUICK FACTS

Taxi operators' earnings fall as gas prices rise

From page A1

hear our petition."

Declining numbers, profits

About 48,000 cars are registered with the Land Transportation Office all over the country. Of this number, about 36,000 operate in Metro Manila.

About 20,000 cars in the metropolis are owned either by small players—defined as those that own five units or less—or single-unit operators.

The difficult operating environment has made the taxi business less and less profitable, according to Suzuki.

Indeed, 120 records showed about 7,000 fewer taxi units were registered at the end of last year compared with the previous year.

Many operators are going out of business and just choose to sell their units," Suzuki said, adding that small operators and single-unit operators were particularly hard hit by the price squeeze.

Cutting down on trips

Other operators are choosing to cut down on trips or on the number of days during which they operate their units.

"Many drivers try to choose dates when the volume [of riders] is highest," the PNTOA president said. "Usually, they choose to go out on Mondays, Fridays, days and Fridays."

On other days, it is cheaper to leave the taxis in their garages rather than take them out.

While driving or operating taxis tend to be profitable, each is no longer the case.

"In 2000, a driver who took out a taxi for 24 hours could earn P900 a day, net," Suzuki said. "Nowadays, they're lucky if they can make P450."

Excluding other expenses like meals, Suzuki said a driver nowadays would take home an average of only P100 a day.

The situation is so bad that more and more drivers choose to abandon their vehicles by the roadside and escape having to pay the daily fee ("boundary") to the unit owners on days when earnings are particularly weak.

"Abandoned vehicles are a big problem for us," Suzuki said.

Unconvinced

The fuzzy head of the LTFRB doesn't buy Suzuki's advocacy.

"What says [taxis] are losing money?" said Ma. Elena Bautista. "They're making a lot."

The LTFRB chair said she asked three of her staff members to pose as drivers and lease taxis from operators and operate them for a day just to see whether the PNTOA's complaints were valid.

Her undercover drivers each paid the operators a P600 "boundary" fee to rent the taxis for 12 hours, and spent an additional P1,000 for gasoline.

The result at the end of the day?

"They took home P700," Bautista said. "That's bigger than my salary for a day."

Because of this, the LTFRB has refused to hear the fare increase petition filed by the taxi association in October last year.

Find balance

"They simply have to find a balance," Bautista said, admitting that taxis that operate for 24 straight hours are bound to earn less because of the "dead hours" of the day.

Based on the reports of her field agents, Bautista said drivers who took out taxis for 24 hours still made, on the average, P900 a day.

"What are they complaining about?" she said.

The LTFRB chair was also unwilling to compromise on several requests for concessions that Suzuki's group had put forward, including the suspension of the fuel-efficiency tests or the installation of emission-testing meters by this month. The measure is meant to help the bureau of internal revenue collect more taxes from the lightly taxed sector.

"They have to pay taxes," she said. "That's the law."

Enter the 'solution'

While the LTFRB and the PNTOA are at odds over almost every issue, they do see eye to eye on one particular remedy for the taxi industry.

Both believe that the conversion of taxis from gasoline to liquefied petroleum gas-using vehicles will help make the taxi business more profitable.

This rare common ground is giving rise to a whole new industry.

We're seeing more and more clients asking to convert their cars to LPG, especially among taxis," said Jose Myles Pregil, the sales and marketing director of Autolocanyo Enterprises Inc.

The company specializes in converting gasoline-powered cars into LPG-powered ones, and it is proving to be a lucrative business.

At present, about 8,000 cars around the country—mostly taxis—are already running on LPG. Between 35 percent and 40 percent of these conversions were made by Autolocanyo which, along with rivals, counts the conversion business as the entire local market for LPG conversions.

Pregil said the rationale for shifting to LPG power was obvious.

"LPG costs P25 per liter compared with almost P44 per liter for gasoline," he said. "So automatically, you save around 40 percent in fuel costs."

THE DIFFICULT operating environment has made the taxi business less and less profitable, according to the president of a taxi operators' association. AFP

From this, the operator subtracts a "wastage" of 10 percent because of the LPG tank's weight, which is equivalent to the weight of one passenger.

"So while you get about 10 kilometers per liter for gasoline engines, you'll get between eight and nine kilometers on LPG power," he said. "That's still saving."

In addition, LPG burns cleaner than gasoline or diesel, making it one of the most environment-friendly fossil fuels available on the market.

Conversion, however, doesn't come cheap.

Obstacles

Price is the biggest obstacle to more widespread use of LPG.

A conversion kit for carburetor engines costs P35,000, including the LPG tank and the labor to install it. The kit for school injection engine costs P50,000.

The PNTOA's Suzuki said most small taxi operators could not afford this investment, explaining that only large fleet operators could shell out the money needed to convert to LPG power.

Pregil acknowledged that the kits were still expensive. They are imported from Europe.

"The government has to help us by lowering the duties," he said. Pregil explained that the government levies a 30-percent import duty on the LPG tanks, ostensibly because similar units can be obtained from local manufacturers.

He is hesitant to use locally manufactured tanks, however, due to their poor quality.

"This is a new industry and one accident can kill it," Pregil said.

Few refilling stations

The other obstacle is the lack of refilling stations to serve the needs of the growing fleet of taxis running on LPG.

There are only three Petron stations in Metro Manila which dispense LPG fuel each in Pasig, Makati and Valenzuela), plus two more in Cebu, according to the Department of Energy.

Pilipinas Shell has seven LPG pumps installed in various taxi garages around Metro Manila and in provincial locations.

Small petroleum players like Unioil, Eastern Petroleum and Flying V are also putting up their own LPG stations.

Long queues

When stations need to be put up to prevent long queues when taxi fill their tanks, according to Pregil.

He noted that filling up LPG tanks was also a slower process than for a gasoline tank. "It takes about six minutes to fill up a regular 45-liter LPG tank," he said. "That's why the lines are long."

To solve these problems, have the use of LPG and help the taxi industry survive, Pregil and Suzuki said that government initiative was crucial.

Because the government, through the LTFRB, is the only entity authorized to charge higher fares, both agreed that more had to be done to promote LPG.

"In fact, the government encourages taxi owners to convert to LPG by paying them 1,000 euros," Pregil said.

But the cash-strapped Philippine government, however, such encouragement is easier said than done.

Are You Missing Out On These Pleasure Factors During Sex?

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JOR

Lobbyist tells how he bribed US lawmakers

From page A1

in thanks.

Wilkes had set up separate meetings with the lawmakers hoping to win a government contract, and he planned to punctuate each pitch with a campaign donation.

According to Wilkes, his honorees congressman Rep. Bill Lowery of San Diego, a Republican, had told him that presenting the money the wrong way.

Last November, Wilkes was described as "unindicted co-conspirator No. 1" in a plea agreement signed by Rep. Randy Cunningham, R-Calif., a member of the House appropriations committee.

In the plea deal, Cunningham admitted accepting more than $2.4 million in cash and gifts from Wilkes and other contractors.

Wilkes confidante Brent Wilkes is a related investigation of the House appropriations committee. The inquiry has focused on the relationship between Wilkes and his longtime friend, and Rep. Jerry Lewis, R-Calif., who is the chair of the committee and the former chair of its defense subcommittee.

Speaking publicly for the first time since Cunningham's plea agreement, Wilkes said in interviews that he had done nothing wrong and did not believe that Lewis and Lowery had broken the law.

'I played to win'

Wilkes, who has not been charged in the Cunningham case, has refused appeals by prosecutors for him to plead guilty.

But Wilkes acknowledged that he was a willing participant in what he characterized as a "confidence" system in which campaign contributions were a prerequisite for federal contracts.

"I attempted to get help and advice from people who could show me the way to do it right," Wilkes said. "I played by their rules, and I played to win."

Wilkes described the appropriations process as little more than a shakedown.

He said that lobbyists draw up the committee members' seemingly demanded campaign contributions from encompassed like him.

Wilkes said his associates have given more than $750,000 to federal campaigns since 1997, and he said he had brought in more as a fundraiser.

Since 2000, Wilkes' personal company has received about $100 million in federal contracts. New York Times News Service

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Helena Z Benitez, Former Senator and Educator
St. Luke's Institute of Digestive Diseases Patron
Because of her recurring abdominal pains, Ms. Helena Z Benitez had long been scheduled for endoscopy, a procedure that uses a flexible lighted tube (endoscope) to examine the body's internal organs. But fear of the procedure - the procedure's name alone scared her - made her put off the decision to undergo it.
"Only doctors at St. Luke's were able to explain the procedure to me in a comprehensive and reassuring way," narrates the former Senator.
Ms. Benitez promptly agreed to undergo gastroscopy and colonoscopy (endoscopy of the stomach and colon, respectively) at St. Luke's Institute of Digestive Diseases. The procedures enabled doctors to diagnose and treat Ms. Benitez's antral erosive gastritis, as well as endoscopically remove polyps in her colon.
"I was extremely satisfied with the results of my endoscopy," she says.
Ms. Benitez only has praises for St. Luke's personnel and facilities. "The doctors are very competent and the way they relate to patients is excellent. The hospital staff is very helpful. I am very satisfied with the services, personnel and facilities of St. Luke's. I recommend St. Luke's to others."
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Primer on effective whistle-blowing out

from page A1

Technical Working Group said 83 percent of those who believed they had succeeded in blowing the lid off a corruption case admitted having encountered difficulties.

On the other hand, 91 percent of those who said the cases against the corrupt public officials they had exposed were ongoing and that had yet to be considered that they had successfully defeated their intended purpose.

"All the respondents of the 20 focus group discussions conducted nationwide exhibited encouraging demographic indications that offer hope and opportunities for whistle-blowing in the Philippines," said the study funded by the US Agency for International Development.

"Despite the overwhelming admission of the difficulties that come with the experience in whistle-blowing, the respondents showed no sign of retreat as they press on and play their part as whistle-blowers," it added.

The difficulties mentioned by the participants included being placed on a hit list, rejected from higher ups and even ostracism by peers who should instead provide a significant support base.

Apathy and the prospect of the cases going nowhere were also mentioned.

The technical working group, however, said the FGDs should be taken as indicative only in terms of "describing the state of whistle-blowing in the Philippines," not as a comprehensive baseline and probabilistic study.

"These findings will certainly benefit further studies that will be conducted in the future," it said.

The Ombudsman and the Commission on Social Spenders of the Country of Asian in the Philippines conducted 20 focus group discussions—four in Metro Manila, two in southern Luzon, two in southern Luzon, and six each in the Visayas and Mindanao—among 263 participants.

Gov't, public sectors

Almost half of the participants were from the government and public sectors. The rest included representatives from the religious, business, professional and academic sectors.

Seventy-three percent of them had gone to college.

Only 38 percent, or 94, of the participants had direct experience in whistle-blowing; 62 percent or 163, did not have the personal knowledge of related issues, having been involved in an interrogation program.

"Even those who have no direct experience in whistle-blowing but have a personal knowledge of issues affecting whistle-blowers imply a potential broad base of support," the study said.

In real the demographic profile of the FGD respondents showed that whistle-blowers could come from the government or private sector across income classes, educational levels, gender and age brackets, as well as sectoral affiliations.

"This is an important revelation in terms of who or what group of the respondents were inclined or prone to whistle-blowing. At the public arenas, it seems there are many 'whistle-blowers' in the broader and larger population of the society," the study added.

The study has so far led to the publication of 'Mini A (Short) Primer on Whistle-blowing."

"Based on the FGD workshop results, the Mini primer gives special emphasis on two important requisites to ensure more success to whistle-blowing—completeness of documents or sufficiency of evidence and extent of external support," said Dr. Bonnie Miranda, Ebrot' national coordinator.

"These two requisites help extinguish the common misconception that bumper whistle-blowers—lack of protection and lack of legal and financial assistance," he added.

The manual tells prospective whistle-blowers to provide investigators with reliable and verifiable information, to get a reliable support base from family friends and well-meaning willingness, to get personal life documented and to make the most with the law of inertia).

"Individuals, whistle-blowers are moved by a sense of concern for justice and the common good. The focus should be on the situation or the action or the threat to public interest, and not on the character of the person of the official or employee involved," said Fr. Albert Alejo, S.J., Ebrot' team leader.

A whistle-blower, for example, who alarms the public about the toxic waste being spilled in a local river is worried about the poisoning of the fish and the fishermen, rather than in terms of simply maligning the Department of Environment and Natural Resources," he added.

The primer encourages "formal linkages with the media, church and the academe for a better and wider critical mass." It however warned against "collaborating with political organizations and cause-oriented groups," saying it often compromised the independence and reliability of watchdogs.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL
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18th Week in Ordinary Time
Feast: St and Companions / Color: Green
1st Reading: Jer 28:1-17
Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21
On hearing the death of John the Baptist, Jesus sets out reverently by boat for a secluded place. But the people learn of it, and they followed him on foot from their towns. When Jesus went ashore, he saw the crowd gathered there and he had compassion on them. And he healed their sick.
Later in the afternoon, his disciples came to him and said, "We are in a lonely place and it is now late. You should send them away so that they can go to the villages and buy something for themselves to eat."
But Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat." They answered, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fishes." Jesus said to them, "Bring them here to me."
Then he made everyone sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fishes, raised his eyes to heaven, pronounced the blessing, broke the loaves and handed them to the disciples to distribute. And they all ate, and were satisfied. When enough, they, the disciples gathered up the leftovers, filling twelve baskets. About five thousand men had taken these besides women and children.
Commentary:
Herod and the prophet preaches what the king and people want to hear, often the wonders and miracles of God are not what they expect the people, and Jeremiah in the Jeremiah is to cut that now they take a thread of iron and [illegible] prophet raised John Baptist the prophet and he will die within the year. He forgot often that Jesus lives in the shadow of hatred and threat, and that most of what he says and does is in response to death. John John the Baptist is dead and the people are scattered and hostile to Jesus finds them with words of hope and bread to gather, knowing he can and hence the fate of the prophet before him.
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RICARDO ZAPANTA
DAVAO CITY

Coming soon to a school near you – a call center

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

BY PLANE PLUS TRAINING, PHILIPPINE graduates looking for jobs will no longer have to look very far.

The Commission on Higher Education is building call centers in at least 30 state colleges and universities all over the country to be fully operational within the year, Ched Chairman Carlos Primo told the Inquirer.

"This is the most ideal setup for a call center. Schools are guarded sometimes and outgoing [call] regularly get a fresh supply of graduates," Primo said.

For the project—the bidding for which will begin in two weeks—Ched is ready to pour in at least P500 million.

The college students would be employed as trainers and the graduates would have instant jobs as call center agents.

The winning call center builder will pay Ched for the first years to allow the commission to recover its investment. Afterward, the companies will pay the schools directly, boosting their incomes, Primo said.

Aside from being a "very lucrative business proposition," Primo said the project would boost the teaching of English in the schools and improve the quality of graduates.

Selected institutions will also at least two classrooms for the call center operations, Primo said.

The following schools have been selected for the project: Mariano Marcos State University and Ilocos Norte State University, Region I; Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology and Tarlac State University, Region III;

Cavite State University, Laguna Polytechnic State College, Batangas State University, Palawan State University and Occidental Mindoro National State College, Region IV;

Bicol University, Region V; Aklan State University and Western Visayas State College of Science and Technology, Region VI;

Cebu State College of Science and Technology, Region VII;

Leyte Normal University, Leyte State University and Southern Samar State University, Region VIII; Jose Rizal Memorial State College and Western Mindanao State University, Region IX; Kidapawan State College, Region X;

University of Southern Philippines, Region XI; University of Southern Mindanao, Region XII; Northern Mindanao State Institute of Science and Technology, Caraga Region; Benguet State University, Cordillera Administrative Region, and Polytechnic University of the Philippines, National Capital Region.

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World youth to meet in RP

THE PHILIPPINES will host the 2006 International Youth Festival in which youth leaders, educators and delegates from over 40 countries will take part.

The four-day event seeks to promote the "World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond," which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1995. The delegates will discuss ways to eradicate hunger and poverty in the world.

The festival will start with a wreath-laying at Rizal Park by local delegates at 10 a.m. on Aug. 13, to be followed by formal opening rites at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Theater in Quezon City.

Dr. Hyun Jin Moon, president of International Relations Board for World Peace and Blessing, and Filipino singer Lea Salonga.

Capping the festival on Aug. 14 will be the Miner and Miss International Pageant at the University of the Philippines Theater in Quezon City.

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Filipino refugees swell

A-mongga A1

conflict to respect the flags of civilians, including Filipinos, seeking safe passageways and stories being used for evacuation and other humanitarian purposes," Ms. Arroyo said in statement.

More than 2,000 OFWs have evacuated to the Philippines, but most of the others are either trapped in Lebanon or simply refuse to leave, officials said.

"Public confidence in the (Philippine) government is developing," the Beirut-based diplomat said. "Many of them are still thinking of their jobs. If they leave and return to the Philippines, would there be jobs waiting for them here?"

"It's doubtful we can get everybody out," the diplomat added.

Coast Guard ships

Two Australian-made Philippine Coast Guard vessels are in Iskenderun, Turkey, and are expected to reach Beirut on Wednesday to pluck out those who want to leave.

But the two vessels, expected to travel at 15 knots (one knot is equivalent to 1.85 kph), will likely take 15 days or so to before reaching Lebanon, Coast Guard spokesperson Lt. Cmdr. Joseph Coyme said.

"They got wind of the recent bombings. It's also a result of the campaign of our officials to get OFWs there to go to our evacuation sites," Foreign Undersecretary Esteban Conejos said, explaining the surge in the number of OFWs in the Beirut relocation center.

Situation unpredictable

"They (the Lebanese) may be used to the fighting but the Filipinos are not used to seeing this kind of war," a diplomatic source said.

"We must get them out as fast as we could," he said, adding that the situation was volatile and unpredictable.

Relentless Israeli air strikes have destroyed roads and bridges in many parts of Lebanon. The Israeli Navy has also maintained a total blockade of all Lebanese ports since the war began 23 days ago. (See story on Page A1.)

Diplomats said the war has forced some Lebanese, Syria, which was used the other day to evacuate 656 OFWs, into Damascus and hoped that the four-lane highway previously used by evacuation bus which was ravaged by Israeli bombardment.

Others staying behind

"The convoys are now using old roads. They are OK, but they are sophisticated and worn, and you skimp the condition," the diplomat said. "You added at least two more hours to the trip.

The OFWs who have returned to the Philippines said it took them 10 hours to get to Syria.

"It's because of the immigration checks upon entering Syria. The OFWs' papers are checked one by one," the diplomat said.

Philippine officials in Beirut either go house-to-house or call up Filipinos in Lebanon to inform them of the order for total evacuation.

Still, some OFWs told the embassy and labor officials in Lebanon that they would rather stay behind.

Nurses, cooks feel safe

Diplomats cited the case of Filipino nurses and hospital workers in Sidon and a group of OFWs working as bartenders, cooks and waitresses in a Japanese restaurant in Beirut.

"The nurses said they felt safe where they were while the group working at the restaurant said no one has been killed in Beirut," the diplomatic source said.

The OFWs, who were being auctioned by their employers reportedly grab the opportunity to leave.

Philippine officials have also encountered Lebanese employers who hanged down their phones on them. Other employers continued to insist to their Filipino households that there was no war going on, diplomats said.

Tearful parting

But some employers heeded the Philippine government's call and even fought their Filipina help to the evacuation center.

"Hindi nga daw sa iwan, hinggang sasakan sila sa bisikan (some also went their Filipino help at end of the hand)," the diplomat said.

The Lebanese immigration office has pegged the number of Filipino workers at 56,000, many of them undocumented.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said the latest batch of evacuees have fleeted, was expected to arrive in Manila tomorrow. Another batch is scheduled to arrive on Friday.

Waiting for clearance

Based on reports from officials, some of the hundreds of OFWs still in the education center several yesterday had been able to leave.

Officials said they were still awaiting clearance from the Israelis so the Filipino convoys could travel safely. They said to relay the Israeli government three days to set aside Philippine request for clearance if entered through the embassy in Tel Aviv.

Conejos said the crisis team in Lebanon was scheduling the departure for Syria of 140 of the hundreds staying at the relocation site in Beirut.

Offer from Cebu Pacific

From Syria, the hands of OFWs will return home on a plane that Cebu Pacific is offering for free, Conejos said.

He said Cebu Pacific was in the process of picking up a newly-acquired plane in Germany and since the flight to Manila would be empty, it had offered of or flight for the OFWs.

He said the 465 OFWs, who took a detour route in Syria after Friday's bombing of the Filipinos' usual escape route, were now at a building owner of the IOM in Syria.

Arriving tomorrow

The batch was expected to leave Syria today via a free IOM flight and were expected to be home tomorrow at 6 a.m., he said, adding that the agency was arranging another flight for Friday.

Conejos said officials had yet to coordinate their plans on how many Filipinos had signified their desire to return home following the mandatory evacuation order.

He said officials also had no specific figures on how many OFWs remained in southern Lebanon, the scene of heavy fighting. All he knew so far was that the OFWs were concentrated in the town of Sidon and numbered 300.

Shuttle service

The Coast Guard said the two Australian ships leaving for Lebanon—the BRP Batangas and BRP Pampanga, both manually used for search and rescue—would do "shuttle service" between Lebanon and nearby Cyprus, Turkey and Egypt.

"We want to be using the Filipino directly to the Philippines because that would take a long time. Our main concern is to get as many Filipinos out of Lebanon and into neutral areas in as little time as possible," Coyme told the beginner.

Each vessel can carry about 200 passengers and is expected to make several trips between Lebanon and neighboring countries.

Each has a sickbay, a deck for visiting boats, a decompression chamber, a helipad and communications equipment, including satellite phones.

Each boat's 50 crews were still include doctors, nurses and lawyers to help process the evacuees' papers, and a special operations group members to handle security.

Source of pride

Initially, the PCG proposed to charter ships to bring the Filipinos home, with each ship having a capacity of 1,000.

Coyme said the PCG had spoken with several shipping companies in the Philippines, but they never apprehension about entering Lebanese territory in the face of the Israeli bombings.

In her statement, Ms. Arroyo said she was very proud of the courage of the OFWs and of the work of the crisis team.

"The toughness and resilience of the Filipino we known the world over and this is another shining moment for our solidarity and not the usable unknown passions," she said.

"The situation is fraught with danger and every prayer of hope and deliverance counts. This is a challenge addressed to the whole Philippine nation at the possibility of an early transition, and the call for unity and steadfastness sincere," Ms. Arroyo said.

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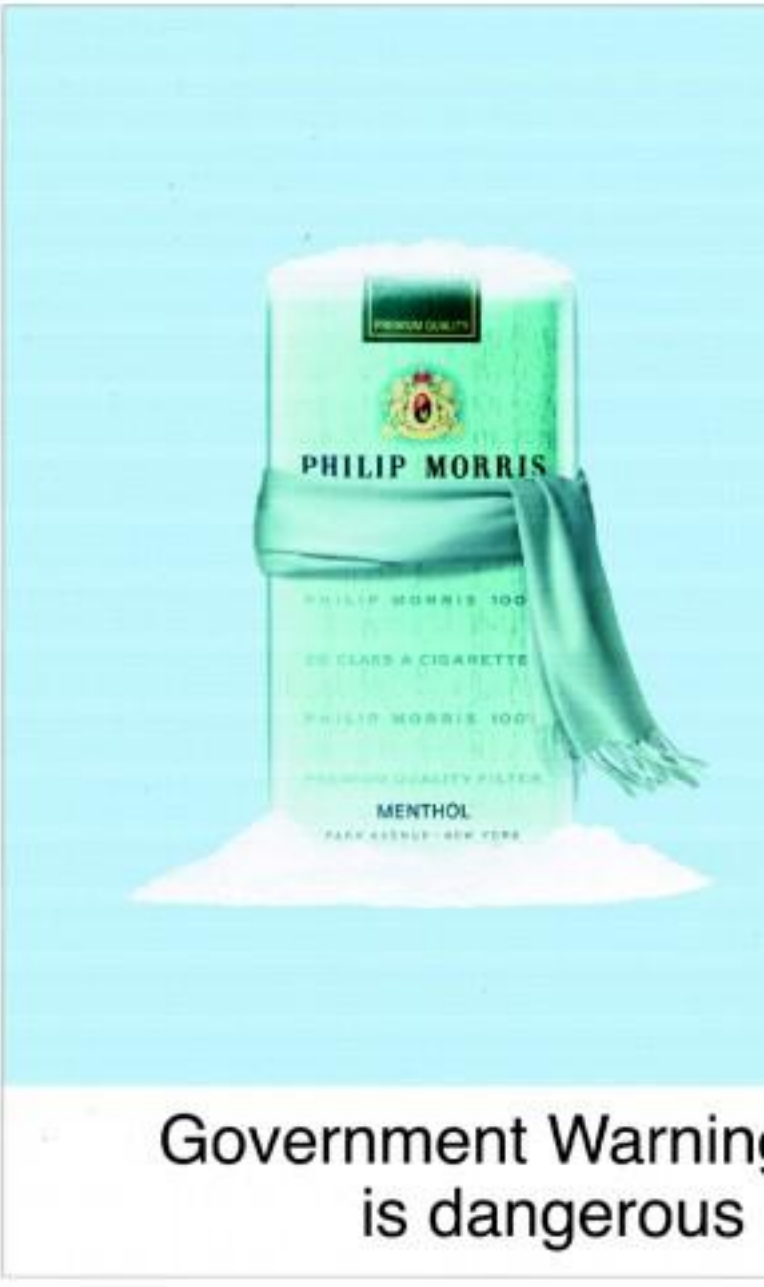

ers as they fire a mortar into Lebanon from their position on the Israeli-Lebanese border AP/File

UN ceasefire...

From page A1

of Adasi, just south of Tyre, saying people had been killed there as well.

Ground fighting raged across swaths of south Lebanon as well on Sunday.

Hezbollah guerrillas said they fired rockets to ensure from the border village of Adaisse. Two Israeli tanks and two bulldozers were destroyed and three armor crew on their killed or wounded. The Israeli army, however, denied the report and said its troops were still operating in Adaisse.

Witnesses said Israel on Sunday shelled mixed areas on the Ghaziyeh coastal highway, which is reported Sunday according to the Lebanese border village of Houla and 18 villages along the Litani River, which runs north across south Lebanon.

No-stop no fighting

Shortly after the United States announced an agreement with France on a draft UN ceasefire resolution on the 25th day of the conflict, a Hezbollah Cabinet minister said militant Shiite guerrillas would not stop fighting until all Israeli troops left Lebanon. The draft resolution contains no such demand.

"We [will] abide by it on condition that no Israeli soldier remains inside Lebanese land. If they stay, we will not abide by it," said Abdel-Jaleel Fneish, one of two Hezbollah ministers of the Lebanese government.

An Israeli Cabinet minister said Israel, too, had no intention of ending its offensive for the moment.

"The Israeli military continues to act in the meantime, without letup, in many areas," Tourism Minister Isaac Herzog said. "We still have the coming days for many military missions, but we have to ensure that the ceasefire is becoming increasingly clearer."

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met with senior ministers late Saturday. They approved the continuation of the Lebanon offensive according to the present guidelines, according to officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters. The meeting of seven ministers did not discuss the draft UN Security Council resolution.

The Lebanese government said it objected to portions of the US-French draft resolution and would demand that some provisions be amended.

"The government has objected to the US-French draft resolution. It has made amendments to some of the provisions and has sent them to Lebanon's UN representative," an aide to Prime Minister Fuad Siniora told The Associated Press late Saturday.

Far more hungry

Even if the UN Security Council adopts the resolution—hard fought in long negotiations between the United States and France—the task of winning agreement from the warring parties portends a far more benign diplomatic road than the one already traveled.

As written, the resolution would be a difficult, if not impossible, pill for Hezbollah to swallow, particularly language calling for the "unconditional release" of two Israeli soldiers captured by the guerrillas in a cross-border raid on July 12. The hostage taking prompted the Israeli campaign in Lebanon.

Hezbollah wanted the two soldiers to use them as bargaining tools for the release of Arab prisoners held by Israel, including three Lebanese. While the draft resolution directs Hezbollah to release the Israelis unconditionally, it only encourages "efforts aimed at securing the issue of the Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel."

That language may prove the fundamental dealbreaker for Hezbollah, whose leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah put forward eight days into the conflict seven to release the two Israeli soldiers without a prisoner exchange even "if the whole universe conspired against us."

As it became clear a US-French agreement on the draft UN ceasefire resolution was drawing near, Israeli-Hezbollah fighting gave part to daily tension.

More air strikes

Israel resumed air strikes on Hezbollah strongholds in south Beirut and for the first time struck in the Christian-heartland north of the coastal, resulting heights and severing the last major road link to Syria and the outside world.

In the past two days, Hezbollah fired at least 360 rockets into Israel, including the deepest strike of the conflict—six rockets, some 60 km south of the border. Six civilians were killed in the attacks.

Over the same period, Israel conducted as many as 170 air strikes on targets in Lebanon, killing at least 40 people.

The UN peacekeeping force in the south of the country, known as Unifil, reported what it called "intense shelling and exchanges on the ground" all along the country's border. Israel has taken control of a band of territory a few kilometers deep right across the frontier.

In the most dramatic operation, Israeli commandos battled Hezbollah guerrillas in a raid on an apartment building in the southern Lebanese port city of Tyre. The raid was the latest Israeli commando operation deep inside Lebanese territory aimed at striking out Hezbollah positions.

Both Israel and Hezbollah claimed victory in the Tyre battle. Israel claimed it was "very successful" in taking out a few guerrilla unit members in firing long-range rockets into Israel—including reaches Hezbollah's.

Lebanese military and rescue workers said at least five Lebanese—including a soldier at a border checkpoint—were killed in the raid. The Israeli military reported eight soldiers wounded, two seriously.

Israeli jets continued pounding targets late Saturday and early Sunday with strikes near Tyre, southern market towns of Nabatiyeh and two separate roads to the north of the country, both of them leading to Syria.

Death toll

So far, at least 500 people have died in the fighting in Lebanon including 500 civilians, 24 members of the Army and 50 Hezbollah guerrillas. Added to the total deaths were five Syrian farm workers killed in an Israeli air strike just inside the Lebanese border in the Bekaa Valley whose deaths were not counted when the attack occurred on Friday.

The Israeli military issued a statement late Saturday saying it had killed more than 400 Hezbollah guerrillas since the fighting began. Eighty-nine Israelis have also died, including 35 soldiers and 24 civilians killed by Hezbollah rockets. AP

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OPINION

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Snubbing Jinggoy

EDITORIALS

ON ITS FACE, MALACAÑANG'S DECISION TO BAR officials of the executive from appearing before the Senate committee investigating the ongoing evacuation of overseas Filipino workers from Lebanese war zones is reasonable. The resolution, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said, did not condemn to the new guidelines set by the Supreme Court: it did not refer to a "possible needed amount"; it did not specify the questions to be asked. Ermita added a practical reason: he and other officials invited to the Senate inquiry were busy with the evacuation.

It doesn't help that a trigger-happy Sen. Jinggoy Estrada was caught playing "gotcha." After last Monday's en-banc ruling that the Senate labor committee presented "By not attending this committee hearing, we have resolved the conclusion that the funds from Owwa-[the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration] cannot be explained." Really? After only one hearing, and when the evacuation is ongoing? There is a difference between scoring perceptive points and clairvoyantly the truth, or at least the legally actionable. Sen. Jose Ponce Enrile should give him a crash course on how to lay the predicate.

But—here's the truth, or part of it—the en-show farce is part of a pattern of official evasiveness that cannot be ignored. Senate President Manuel Villar, whose election last month generated unusual controversy from the Palace, called the executive's lack of cooperation for what it was: a "continuation of EO 464," meaning the Arroyo administration's efforts to limit appearances before congressional investigations.

"I hope that they would not use this to the hilt because otherwise it would destroy the system," Villar said. That system is nothing less than the organizing principle that gives substance to the Constitution's check-and-balance. In other words, what is at stake in this issue is not merely respect for the Senate, but the very idea of accountability. Public office is a public trust only to the extent that officeholders hold themselves accountable to the public.

Of course, if context is necessary to understand the true meaning behind Ermita's smooth statements, it is also crucial in determining the best time to conduct the inquiry.

It seems to us that Sen. Juliet Antonyo's suggestion to his fellow senators outlines the right balance: Restrain first in demanding an accounting of the use of the funds, but first help speed up the evacuation. Specify the line at hand and list the questions, and then wait for the right time.

Estrada has criticized the ongoing evacuation as "paranoid" and inadequate. "Is that because of lack of policy, lack of funds? These are the questions we have to answer." Important questions, so all the more reason for Ermita's committee to do its homework. It must not preside the artful dodgers in the administration room more room for evasive maneuvers.

Insulting Rolex

WHEN ILOILO REP. ROLEX SUPLICO FOUND A store in the upscale Ginza district of Tokyo selling Rolex watches at a 30 percent discount, he thought he should go to and buy not one but two—so his colleagues in the opposition might stop—of the expensive watches. He wanted one for his daughter and another for his son; the discounted cost of the two watches was P290,000. "For the price of one, it was as if I was buying two," the impeachment leader told Congress reporters last Monday.

Well, not exactly. But the issue declined his credit card, thinking it was stolen, and that's where Suplico's private anguish becomes a matter of public interest.

We have nothing against the rich buying what they think their children deserve, but we expect more of politicians who claim to occupy the moral high ground. The news about Suplico's conspicuous consumption first ended up using another congressman's capacious credit card, to upend the equivalent of the annual salary of two public school teachers, before it ended up in cyberspace, for his constituents in the Philippines, in Tokyo's downright climatology.

"I was humiliated being told I was a criminal using a stolen card," he said, again, not with the governess parent's tone. When he complained to the bank in Manila, he grew angrier when he realized his case was being treated as routine. "A bank vice president or higher officer should have talked to me," he said.

That, we suppose, is because he's with the minority. If he were with the party in power, we bet this issue he'd ask for the bank president himself.

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The Maysilo Estate land case

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

PROOF THAT THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE IN the Philippines are the slowest in the world is the land case that Cielo several generations in Manila in the 1930s. Its spinoff ramifications are long dead before a court once a decided, such is he or her grandchildren and other heirs who continue the case.

One of the longest land cases on record is the one involving the 144 hectares in Cubao, Quezon City, Makati, Valenzuela and Quezon City. The owners, which are previously owned by the family of Don Eusebio Tuason y Pobre, was subdivided into five tracts—OCTs 981, 983, 984, 985 and 986.

The present controversy, still under litigation, concerns only OCT 984, dated May 3, 1917, covering 1,342 hectares. The date for issuance of the title is not in the case records.

On July 6, 1937, the Court of First Instance of Rizal ordered the registration of the land covering OCT 984 among the 32 co-owners, five of whom were Jose Ruiz and Maria de la Concepcion Tuason.

The land acquired by Jose Ruiz was registered under TCT 16052 covering Lot 20-A-3 of the Maysilo Estate with an area of 1,174,466.90 square meters. Subsequently, TCT 21857 was issued in the name of Jose Ruiz covering the same area on May 25, 1932.

TCT 16052 was later redistributed into TCT 20350, 20351, 20352, 20353 to 20 and TCT 20359 (101,872 sq. m., both issued in the name of Jose Ruiz.

Later on, the Bureau Institute of Agriculture (BIA) acquired a portion of it—199,282 sq. m.—covered by TCT 20350. The same was registered under TCT 177004-737 in the name of BIA. On the other hand, Victoriano Ex. acquired the land covered by TCT 20359, for which TCT 8198 was issued on Oct. 15, 1947 in favor of Victoriano.

Maria de la Concepcion Tuason, Ma. acquired the land covered by TCT 16196 from Monteiro. On May 26, 1949, TCT 12574 was issued by that parcel of land in the name of MA.

One of the original owners of Maysilo Estate under OCT 984 was the late Maria de la Concepcion Tuild. She was married to Benjamin Romualdez and had four children—Epifania, Pedro, Fernando and Severo.

Epifania died in 1954 but left no children. Pedro had four daughters—Eleanor and Norma Teresa is now deceased and is survived by children Felipe, Modesto, Venancio, Felipe and Isabela, all four married Majorbo.

Fernandezes is survived by three children—Josefa, Joaquin and Romero, all married Quijano.

Severo died sometime in 1937 and is survived by his son Bartolome Rivera, whose mother was Luisa Pizarro Gutierrez.

On Sept. 20, 1960, Bartolome Rivera and Interior Jose Dizon executed unto an agreement whereby the former assigned to the latter 25 percent of the total land area of Lot Nos. 20, 26, 27, 28-B and 29 in accusatory's favor.

On June 13, 1966, the Pasig CFI, through Judge Cecilio Muñoz-Palma, approved the Deed of Conveyance in favor Bartolome of the 25 percent of whatever Bartolome Rivera was entitled to under Lot 20, 26, 27, 28-B and 29 from OCT 984. The surviving heirs of Maria de la Concepcion Tuild asked a Caloocan court to partition their shares under OCT 984 which the court approved on Dec. 29, 1965.

But in an order dated Aug. 16, 1966, Judge Palma denied Dizon's motion to annul him the 25-percent share because there was no more portion left to be given to Dizon as he made up claims on the land. It resulted, the heirs of Fernando Rivera said that whatever portion of the property covered by OCT 984 which had not been disposed of by the previous owners had already been assigned and subdivided to the

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volume forces endless wrangles.

Eleven years later, Nelson filed a case before the Caloocan CFI to confirm the order of confirmation of Pasig Judge Palma without however presenting the Aug. 15, 1966 order dismissing his motion for the awarding of his share of the property.

Lawyers say that Dizon's case was filed in the wrong court since his action was essentially an enforcement of an order which was issued by a Pasig judge. The case should have been filed before Judge Palma.

But on Oct. 18, 1977, Caloocan City Judge Marcelino Sayo granted Dizon's petition despite the fact that he never presented the original copy of OCT 984 and could not even plead in support of the Decision of Conveyance of Lots 25-A 1, 25-A-2, 26 and 28 in the name of Dizon.

Dizon's lawyer then went to the assessor's office of Quezon City, Diliman where they filed an action for recovery of possession with damages and annulment of TCTs against IBA, claiming that the latter's TCT envelopped a portion of his property.

The Caloocan RTC upheld Dizon's claims and ordered IBA to return the property complained. The Court of Appeals upheld the findings of the lower court.

IBA then filed a motion for reconsideration. The Department of Justice and the Senate, in separate reports, affirmed IBA's contention that OCT 984 was issued on May 3, 1917 by the Register of Deeds by virtue of Decree 36455 issued on April 15, 1907, in Land Registration Case 6429. IBA then filed a motion for reconsideration but it was never heard based on newly discovered evidence (the DOJ and Senate reports).

On Aug. 3, 1998, the SA denied ABI's motion, relying mainly on the decision of the Supreme Court in Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System vs. CA (GEL #120, 7811) and Heirs of Lorenzo vs. CA (241 SCRA 527).

IBA then appealed the SA ruling to the Supreme Court on Aug. 3, 1998. In Nov. 3, 2005, the Supreme Court dismissed IBA's petition.

(To be continued tomorrow)

Close-open

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

"THERE'S ANOTHER CASE THAT BEGGERS clearing in this country of bias and cheaters. It was brought to my attention recently by some friends of mine. It's a weird case of events that threatens the integrity of the Supreme Court itself if the case here isn't stopped dead in its tracks. I was about to say, can be cheers unless up left in the Supreme Court, but that intention has subsumed itself of late with remarkable, and quite unexpected, statistical condemnation of Dean Hamilton Katigbak's dishonorable deeds.

But the beauty of the memory. The case concerns the ownership of a 3-hectare property in Quezon City, beside Ayala Heights. On June 24, 1999, the Land Registration Authority rules that the court of land belonged to Homer Barajas-Acol by heirs and not to Soren Jan Mercado and Sandy who had been laying claim to it. Indeed, the LRA found that the Mercados' is the true "claim and spurious."

The case found its way to the Court of Appeals by the aforesaid claim, and the Court of Appeals likewise affirmed in full the findings of the LRA. It reiterated that the title held by the Mercados was "claim and spurious" and the Barajas' title, as held by Juan Teresita Barajas Mercado, "genuine, authentic and existing."

The Mercados brought their case to the Supreme Court and once again the Supreme Court, in the form of the Special First Division, upheld the LRA and Court of Appeals. In its Dec. 12, 2003 ruling, the Court affirmed that the property belonged to the Barajas. The lawyers of the Mercados filed a couple of motions for reconsideration but they were denied by the Supreme Court. In its June 16, 2004 resolution, the Court wrote finally said, "The Second Motion for Reconsideration is prohibited pleading ... In addition, petitioners failed to cite any compelling reason why this Court should disregard the above rules but merely reiterated the very same grounds relied upon in their First Motion for Reconsideration ... No further pleadings will be entertained. Let entry of judgment be issued."

It's easy to see why the LRA, the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court had no trouble in ruling on this case. The documents presented by the Barajas are notarized while those presented by the Mercados are, well, to quote the LRA and the courts, blunt and spurious. The Mercados' title cannot even successfully pinpoint the location of the land, and their branch of conveyance dated 1974 were notarized by a notary public who, according to the Manila RTC, clerk of court, "has not submitted his notarial report for the whole year of 1974 up to the whole year of 1976."

No one would think that all's well that ends well, an attempt at claiming another's property is happily foiled, something that doesn't always end this way in this country. But now comes the strange part, or the weird twist. This has come in fully by two things, both attempting to expose and indict many other people in the case.

One is an attempt by people in media to discredit the current owner, Ramón Barajas Hernandez. Barajas'ds has been accused of being his unprincipled—she is a college teacher—is possibly even such a trust of land. She apparently does not have the requisite number and a master's degree. She plans she is currently in progress.

Two, and more insidiously, is the attempt by former Justice Florentino Feliciano to smear the case through the backdoor by writing the Chief Justice—of 16...pleadings for the case to be reopened with the Supreme Court sitting en banc—that is, such all the justices present and not just those of the First Division. He suggests which the entire appointees in the Judicial Institute for reconsideration.

The first is plain wrong, and does include also it. The plain wrong, the rules has proven with something above important now for Artemio's cases to comprehend, which is determine. He does have a salute and his account number, she does owe the property she lives in, and she does not smell businesses. And yes, she was a college instructor in various schools from 1974 to 1976.

What makes the argument idiotic is that it is her shoulders the case for, and against. But secondly, if she isn't rich, then clearly she had no money to help the IBA, the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court can charge her way as the rich do in this country. And third, in the sense the case, it could only favor here because the evidence was so glaring over the central such on appeal would have holded at trying to twist it. By contrast, all that the opposite idea—that

Understanding the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict

PEOPLE: I CANNOT CLAIM THAT I TRULY understand it. Let me nevertheless share with any reader who'd like some time to think about it some as to the only view that I have. Inspire to pay attention to it.

One thing is certain: this conflict did not begin with the kidnapping by the Hezbollah of two Israeli soldiers last July 12. It is part of a long history of cross-border hostilities which dates back to the time the kidnapping of the Israeli reservists may have served to the immediate trigger for the fighting to begin in earnest.

It is said that the Hezbollah attack on the Israeli patrol was aimed "ignorant Israeli Premier Ehud Olmert the Hezbollah leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah had promised to capture Israeli soldiers and swap them for Lebanese prisoners held by Israel, a Hezbollah statement was quoted as saying. "Implementing our promise to free Arab prisoners in Israeli jails, our mujahedeen commando unit has surrounded its Israeli soldiers in Southern Lebanon." Later the leader Nasrallah would say: "Its military operation will return them. ... The prisoners will not be returned except through our way without negotiations and a trade of prisoners."

Now, it is also said that there was an unrelenting series of bombing raids intended to eliminate Hezbollah's capacity to fight or to harass Israeli villages. But this is not happening. Hezbollah continues to send rockets flying into Israel.

Most strikingly, Israel has launched a ground military which rushes into southern Lebanon. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon to dislodge the Palestine Liberation Organization from Beirut. For 18 years, Israel occupied south Lebanon, withdrawing only in 2000. In 1991, Israel invaded Lebanon in what was called "Operation Accountability." The following attack against Lebanon meant to prevent the Lebanese government to intervene against Hezbollah, and in 1996, it launched what was code-named "Operation Grapes of Wrath," a classic military blitz against Lebanon in an attempt to crush the Lebanese resistance to Israel's occupation of south Lebanon.

Observers also say that both sides had long been preparing for this conflict—Hezbollah by building up its rocket arsenal, and Israel by reorganizing its army and reservists—and that the bad capping of the two Israeli soldiers was not so much a provocation as a pretext for starting a conflict which both sides were eager to start.

What has been the result so far?

When last week resuming the various air-bomb raids, there are mainly hapless civilians, the biggest number of them innocent Lebanese. Presidential, by Filipino workers in Lebanon have so far been spared. But when you look at the pictures of civilians, you see small Lebanese reduced to silence or rendered homeless by the destruction of their homes and buildings and murdered vehicles. It was reported that a third of the Lebanese citizens are displaced and the Lebanese prime minister was quoted as plaintively asking: "Is the value of human life here in Lebanon less than of others in the world? Are we children of a lesser god? Is an Israeli mother more valuable than a drop of Lebanese blood?" Meanwhile, the United States has resisted pressure to mediate an immediate truce.

The Israeli military calls to mind the movement in Russia in 1905, the first revolution of Lithuania and the post-mobilization of civilian population were called genocide. We seem to have something similar here, but Israel is calling it nothing more than the extension of a buffer zone for the protection of its northern Israel.

The rules of war require that disproportionate force must not be used. Nations have learned to, and against the use of disproportionate force. But the Israeli-Hezbollah war in the 2006 fact is not right.

"To have countries who claim to use any dangerous, pernicious force, I have only this to say: you're playing right into us!" The Israeli strategy is that the rock should not be left unbroken. In fact, Israel has warned that everyone remaining in south Lebanon will be regarded as terrorists. Ironically, the Israeli air force flattens villages before it sends ground troops in, to protect the latter.

An editorial in the Asian sun America magazine underscores this:

"The strategy of going after Hezbollah by attacking Lebanon is a return to Bush 41 thinking about invading the Middle East by armed force. Lebanon was the country in the region whose democracy had begun to take a fragile hold. The dollar Republicans thought they could set right democratic system. The Israeli assault and U.S. acquiescence in the Israeli strategy [have] severely undermined the Lebanese army along with chances of democratic elsewhere in the region. It has weakened the hand of moderate Arab forces generally and strengthened the radicals and terrorists, including Iran's theocratic government.

"The main, and Catholics in particular, have reason for some concern, because Lebanon has been the last country in the Middle East where Christians have a significant role in society. The Lebanese experience in multi-religious coexistence, what the Lebanese call 'conviviality', a promising alternative to governance by the mullahs, has been dealt a crippling blow. The weakening of Lebanon's moderate leadership does not only benefit Hezbollah's Iranian backers but also the country's Islamic extremists. The days when the Maronites could exercise effective influence are past. The current crisis calls for American and other Western Christians to defend Lebanon and its Christian and other troops to express our solidarity."

Winning the war vs homelessness

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO, AS HEAD OF THE Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), came out with an advertisement titled "Surviving the War Against Homelessness" in the business. It boasted of the government's accomplishments in housing. But on closer examination, the figures are not as impressive as they seem.

For starters, it is doubted that the 200,000 homes—which the ad claimed have been "completed" through the Pres-dential Freedom from Squatting Program—fail dismally short of the much lower target of 100,000 homes with their lots. Only

COMMENTARY

Anna Marie Karaos and Dave Gilig Perez
Students on Church and Social Issues

the program, government-owned lands are declared socialized housing sites to be distributed to their urban poor occupants.

Entrepreneurs can come with an entire lot tenure, but the latter can only be had when families pay their installments of entitlements for allocation (CELE). So far, only about 14,000 families have been awarded their CELEs. This averaging between seven a five-year period starting in 2001.

Second, the Community Mortgage Program (CMP), which gives housing loans to low-income communities, may have met its annual target of 10,000 families a year. But this target is one to cover low level. The program sets an emphasis—it assisted 70,000 families in five years—has very little impact on the enormous housing need of the country.

Third, the relocation of 40,000 families, although it provides security of tenure for the ad dressees, may have actually resulted in the enforced well-being for many families who have their sources of income as a result of the transfer. The inadequacy of basic services in the resettlement sites has also left many families feeling worse off now than before.

What are the basic causes of the housing problem?

The HUDCC should no more than lately in pushing for the distribution of the government lands. On the other hand, the National Housing Authority, which administers 42 of the 161 sites proclaimed so far, hardly the absence of strategies for the development of these lands.

The other thing there have been some new pronouncements in the past two years compared to the first three years of President Macapagal-Arroyo's presidency, aside into the winning interest of the political leadership to cater to the supposed needs of the urban poor. It will be recalled that the so-called "Oplan Balik Probinsya" program of the Estrada administration, first with the urban poor, was a threat that the newly installed Arroyo administration did not take lightly.

In previous years, the ex-base meetings of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), presided over by the President, have been a forum for the poor to express concerns against efforts to agree to the disposition of the lands they occupied to social housing. During her second term, the President has not convened the NAPC at least because the representatives of the basic sectors have not been appointed. And only here the President delayed their appointments?

It is doubtful that the President's reluctance to let NAPC's second representatives are identified with people who suspected the impeachment move against the President last year. Under the NAPC law, the President can appoint the sectoral representatives only from the list of nominees submitted by the respective sectors. Hence, the President cannot simply appoint people she perceives are not her opponents; she has always not to make any appointments, in effect deactivating the NAPC as a consultative body for basic participation.

As for the problems faced in the relocation projects, the basic issues remain: there is failure to properly plan housing requirements in advance; there is no site care of the livelihood; the communities were allowed to participate in the search for relocation sites, which was a good thing. But because the decisions came late, the vicinity of the families had to be studied, and it was done before the resettlement sites could be fully equipped with the necessary basic services.

The last report of the CMP on the other hand, is burdened by the Social Housing Finance Corp. (SHFC) as base budgetary support. But SHFCs have complained that the SHFC has available funds which it is unwilling to commit to the CMP. The problem, instead of reducing, is compounded.

The SHFC has answered with the claim that the proposed low-interest is due to the applicable commitments' does compliance with the loan requirements.

So what should be done?

First of all, housing targets must be formulated with a view to reducing the housing backlog. As it is, the government is only targeting to deliver 1.4 million units in the 2004 to 2010 vis-à-vis an expected housing need of 3.7 million units for the same period. The private sector can hardly be expected to supply the balance especially since the bulk of the demand for housing comes from low-income families who are not its market.

Then, it is supposed that the targets of the CME the Presidential Proclamations and class upgrading be increased by at least a hundred percent. In addition, the HUDCC must devise appropriate contingency measures for the benefit of families that lose by ineligible or unable to access the CME.

Third, respect to the clearance/eligibility, the implementing rules and regulations for the disposition of the proclaimed sites must be issued, and participation of the concerned communities must be ensured, and the HUDCC must be empowered over overseeing the land distribution. The HUDCC should be allocated a considerable budget to proceed with the disposition of the lands.

In the meantime, the development of the sites should be programmed well in advance. Adequate funding must already be set aside for the provision of basic services and housing facilities' social services—the education, health services and livelihood. In addition, the Local Government and Development Authority must make sure that all infrastructure projects have a resettlement plan with an adequate budget even before they are approved.

Finally, money is needed to make all this possible. If the government is indeed serious about meeting the housing need, it must put its money where its mouth is. President Arroyo must be less than the funds she now available "to subsidized unpaid and economic disparity." What could be more important and effective social projects than homelessness?

Only then will the "War Against Homelessness" be really won.

State of the Enchanted Kingdom (SEK 2007)

IN HER LATEST STATE OF THE NATION Address, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo did not tell us the state of the nation. What she revealed was her state of mind.

What we mean is that she was not dealing with the issues confronting the country. Instead, she was talking about herself and her achievements, as she saw them.

She was not addressing the nation. She was addressing herself.

What we mean is that she was not addressing the nation. She was addressing herself.

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What we mean is that she

LETTERS

PRC: a gov't system that doesn't work

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE CONTROVERSies now plaguing the Professional Regulatory Commission and the reviews centers around the country.

I have doubts about the efficiency of the board exams and a professional license to gauge a person's ability to apply in practical work environments what he has learned in school. Come to think of it, a student spends years to finish a course, then board exams cost more every topic studied in all those colleges years. Yet, board exams seem to be regarded as the only way graduates can be treated as true professionals—by the standards of people who don't seem to have the eminences also when tested, the graduates to get to where they are today.

How could a few hundred questions objectively conducted test getting a professional license—also after he/she had spent years in college answering thousands of questions, not to mention the additional thousands of other requirements he/she had to comply with? But all of these ideas are nothing compared to the biggest folly in the PRC system, money.

One issue about money is the sudden increase in the registration fees by the commission. The PRC now charges close to a thousand pesos for registration, that is about P300 higher than the registration fee a few years back. We, according to first hand account, the PRC system hasn't changed also...to save the computer materials, the sales number of people and the same employee facilities. And don't tell me that the cost of the overhead used for the exams has suddenly gone up. I know that PRC might have raised the fee for the sake of the public school students volunteering as proctors. I have no objection to that, provided the hall of fame really gets to them.

Another issue is employment opportunities. I didn't have much income to study in a review center. This is the reason I had to review on my own and to rely on some handouts from friends. But why should review centers make money just because they probably know what questions might come out? It's like playing a sick form of lottery. Everyone knows that even the most number of "right questions" were hanging rights and probably got to produce the biggest number of topnotchers. Meanwhile, the PRC comes up with questions that are out of this world, except, of course, to the review centers that can pay their light bills.

I mean, must a graduate pay so much just to get the PRC can have the chance to sell him her this he/she is inadequate to become a professional engineer? And that's just the expenses. How about the thousands of other people getting less pass so they can take the licensure exam by saying? Basically the loss of thousands of Filipinos in the pride of a government system has simply doesn't work.

—CHRISTOPHER CASTEL
Baguio City

RP can become Asia's mecca for ecotourism

WE GREATLY APPRECIATE CESAR MAGNAYE's clear opinion regarding the state of tourism in the Philippines and the many opportunities of becoming Asia's mecca for ecotourism and adventure tourism. (PDI, 7/13/06)

We thank Lonely Planet Philippines for featuring the various destinations in our country, including those that are not as well known.

We did previous four short postings, in Bicol, pictured out. But, we have begun to address these concerns. We have, for instance, initiated an annual adventure race, dubbed the Island Paradise Adventure Race (IPAR), designed to showcase the natural resources of the Bicol region and other tourism in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, especially among potential local and foreign visitors, at the same time, to encourage Filipinos to embrace tourism.

IPAR has, since its launching in May 2005, been one of the tools employed by the Department of Tourism in marketing the Philippines as a "fun and fit place" to visit for all types of people. The first two IPAR races covered Bicol from Luzon (in May 2005) and boat-hop Lanao (in June 2006) in Mindanao (2005). The third race will be in Mindoro.

We, at the DOT, under the effective leadership of Secretary Joseph Ace H. Durano, have also encouraged all steps to promote ecotourism and other adventure activities, emphasizing the importance of the Philippines as a venue to consider as a destination.

As in other products conceptualized and launched by the DOT, we are hopeful that IPAR, or other adventure activities, will eventually be taken over and managed by the private sector.

As a matter of policy today's concerns with viewing time, the DOT closely coordinates with local government units and the tourism industry stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of proper and carefully developed tourism master plans in our country.

Like Bikom, we believe that the Philippines is one of Asia's "Last Paradise." We hope, and will endeavor, to share with all the peoples of the world its beauty and the Philippines.

—ROBERTO B. NARAG,
project director, Department of Tourism-Island Paradise Adventure Race,
754 Lakan Street, Ermita, Manila

Unprofessional behavior of MRT drivers

I TAKE THE MRT TRAIN EVERY DAY AND I would like to call attention to the unprofessional conduct of some MRT drivers. I think their behavior reflects on the Department of Transportation and Communications and the MRT management's general efficiency and attitude toward public service.

1. Many drivers are not in proper uniform and are not well-groomed. They are usually dirty in T-shirts (some even colored and printed) and do not wear their polo barong; instead, their long is on the back seat of the driver's seat. Some drivers are even in civilian clothes. Any time a dress code for train drivers and BOC employees? Some of them are also unshaven—their hair is long and they open a bottle of mineral water.

2. In one trip, the driver kept the door of the cockpit open and let a female passenger sit inside (maybe she was his girlfriend or he just wanted to show off his driving skills) from North Avenue to Magallanes station.

3. Every day MRT trains stopped down and we were stranded at the Cubao station for about an hour. When the trains resumed operations, hundreds of people had gathered on the platform. Because the trains were already full of passengers when they arrived in Cubao, people became more frustrated and angry.

The MRT announced that it would send an empty train shortly. When it finally arrived, it moved very slowly as it approached the platform. All the while, the driver and another man inside the cockpit were laughing, as if enjoying the passengers who were already fuming for weak.

What kind of training does the DOTC give MRT drivers? Whatever it is, it's not effective. The drivers are not on top and responsible. If drivers are not functioning normal as OK while they do their duties, they should be booted out. The DOTC and the MRT management should not wait for an accident to happen as a result of the train drivers' unprofessional conduct.

—BARBARA GUAZO,
pbaluan@mail.pds.gov.ph

GSIS eCard to carry pensions in 2007 yet

WE REFER TO RESPONSE TO CESAR M. ALIBIN's letter, "Is GSIS helping or punishing retirees?" (PDI, 6/30).

We thank Alibin for appreciating the benefits that electronic crediting of monthly pensions—the GSIS eCard will bring to its pensioners. We would like to belatedly inform her that the Government Service Insurance System never said—as it has never been its practice—that monthly pensions shall immediately be credited to pensioners' accounts upon payment of the eCard. In fact, the GSIS has instructed our field personnel to advise our pensioners [before the eCards are released to them] that they will continue receiving their monthly checks until their pensions will have shall have been credited to their eCards, starting January 2007.

The GSIS launched the eCard program precisely to eliminate the long waiting time for claiming pension checks. However, since we are still completing the eCard rollout for all our pensioners, we would like to assure our pensioners [before the eCards are released to them] that they will continue receiving their monthly checks until their pensions will have been credited to their eCards, starting January 2007.

The GSIS launched the eCard program precisely to eliminate the long waiting time for claiming pension checks. However, since we are still completing the eCard rollout for all our pensioners, we would like to assure the electronic crediting of their pensions. For this, we humbly ask affiliates and/or their concerns to please bear with us.

—ENRIQUETA D. DE GUZMAN,
EVP/specialties,
Government Service Insurance System,
GSIS Financial Center, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City

How to be a good chief

IF I WERE PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL ARROYO, I would divide my country into five zones:

1. Blue zone—those cool and quiet when talking is allowed.

2. Green zone—good lunch and mountains where running and listening are heavy noise.

3. Yellow zone—food, lunch and detailed discussion where exhibitionists should be on duty.

4. Black zone—polluted area and where about rehabilitation should be done.

5. White zone—areas where explosives must be allowed as security exhibitions.

If individuals and country showed, then President Arroyo may not be ousted President.

—EVA PAZ,
912 Tolentino St.,
Sampaloc, Manila

Across the NATION

E-mail to: pi_nation@inquirer.com.ph

Text us your feedback to inquirer or our news agent's message to 2207 (Globe) or 383 (Smart). Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Poro Point barricaded

By Yolanda Serato Pantoja
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

DAGUPAN CITY—THE CARGO VESSEL OPERATIONS at the Poro Point in San Fernando City in La Union were paralyzed after the port operator barricaded the port area and refused to allow cargo vessels to unload at the pier on Saturday night.

The Poro Point Industrial Corp. (PIPIC) also stopped officials of the Philippine Ports Authority who were ordered to take over the operations of the company by Transportation and Communication Secretary Leandro Mendoza, from entering the facility.

Silverio Mangisenag Jr., a PIPIC port manager assigned to Poro Point, said he received a memorandum from Mendoza on Saturday ordering the PIPIC to turn over the PIPIC's cargo-handling operations at the Poro Point, including stevedoring, arrastre and special services like bagging, trucking and berth management.

Earlier, the Poro Point Management Corp. (PPMC) issued the PIPIC a cease-and-desist order on the services.

Mangisenag said the PPMC has no environmental compliance certificate (ECC) from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and has violated terms in its management contract.

"We were not notified about the takeover orders we tried to enter the port's premises. Barricades were put up by security and other personnel of the PPMC," Mangisenag told the Inquirer in a telephone interview on Sunday.

The PPA sought the help of the La Union police and the Philippine Coast Guard to enforce Mendoza's order.

Mangisenag said four cargo vessels, two of which were loaded with materials used in manufacturing fertilizer, and some smaller vessels were at the dock.

Barricades

The vessels could not unload while the smaller ones could not find berths anywhere because the pier's gates were barricaded with padlocked steel heavy equipment, he said.

Mangisenag said businessmen handling the cargoes were already "impatient" due to the standoff because they have to pay P5,000 to P10,000 a day while at the anchorage for demurrage alone.

"Besides, the consignees are already waiting," he said.

Mangisenag said the PPA will manage the port's operations on a temporary basis until the PPMC will conduct out the operations as another contingency.

"The workers of the PIPIC will not be displaced as they will be absorbed by the new company," he said.

PPIC lawyer Reginio Undoc said Poro Point would sue officials of The Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) and its subsidiary, the PPMC, following the attempted takeover of PIPIC's operations.

Undoc said the PPMC and PPA personnel who tried taking over the PIPIC's operations were armed and "had reportedly acted on the request of the BCDA leadership."

Mangisenag denied that PPA and PPMC personnel were armed. He said policemen and Philippine Coast Guard personnel who accompanied their teams were the ones carrying the firearms.

Undoc said the Poro Point seaport is the object of a legal case filed by PPIC against the BCDA and PPMC. The suit stemmed from a board resolution passed by PPMC that sought to pave the way for a takeover of the facility.

Undoc said the Regional Trial Court in San Fernando City issued an injunction last month preventing the BCDA and PPMC from implementing its takeover resolution.

Agreements

He said the court ordered the agencies to observe the terms and conditions of the earlier agreements signed between PPIC and the BCDA.

"The BCDA and PPMC should be reminded that there is an existing injunction from the court ordering them to maintain the status quo," Undoc said in the statement.

PPIC president Emmanuel Montes said in the same statement that the PPA had apparently acted on the false basis of a letter from the DENR asking the PPIC to explain the alleged absence of an ECC for the Poro Point Port.

Montes said the DENR letter "definitely does not give BCDA and PPMC a legal basis under which to take over the port."

"We are overjoyed at this as we have complied with the DENR requirements so BCDA and PPMC should not try to use this issue to its own ends," he said.

BCDA president Narciso Abaya, in a telephone interview yesterday, said the takeover was proper because the PPIC committed "serious environmental violations" and failed to secure an ECC since it operated in 1999.

He said the Environment Secretary, Angelo Reyes, also issued a temporary cease-and-desist order on PPIC's operations on Friday.

Abaya said Reyes' order showed that the firm has been discharging wastes and industrial wastes into the waters around the Port of San Fernando. —With reports from Priscilla Dejoya, PDI Central Luzon Desk

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CHR probes alleged torture of Iloilo farmers

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—THE COMMISSION on Human Rights is investigating the torture of farmers allegedly by soldiers including some in Iloilo.

Jorge Ramos, investigator of the CHR regional office, said he had already interviewed five of the seven complainants who had earlier executed affidavits accusing members of the army's Scout Rangers and Task Force Bonifacio (TFB) of beating them while under detention on July 12-13.

The farmers, all members of the Interfaith Alliance of Bicolanos and Ilonggos, said they were being forced to admit that they were members of the Communist New People's Army (NPA).

Maj. Ignacio Gobilaw, spokesperson of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, has said the soldiers conducted a legitimate operation in the villages but denied that they had broken up any of the residents.

He said the Task Force would also conduct its own investigation.

Leo de Guzman Jr., Sr. Insp. Dalbert Lucero Sr., Jayboy Salcis, brothers-in-law Bibiano Malpuecos and Benny Cabanes, all residents of Barangay Lanipao, were among those detained.

The CHR official said he had also interviewed and received the statement of another alleged victim, Ida Carter Tee Seventh, Filomeno Bilbao, was too sick to go to the town proper of Calinog, 84.3 km north of Iloilo city, village officials said on that road.

Mayor Jose Gregorio Alain Ramos Diaz and Councilor Roger Diaz Illescas are relatives.

Lauro Bayona Jr. claimed that he was kicked in the belly and repeatedly punched. He said he was grasping for breath, adding his captors covered his head with a plastic bag.

The complainants said that on April 30 or three days before the soldiers beat up some patches and tatters of their and to their authorities, the barangay officials and the Task Force Bangon were the only Army soldiers assigned in the area.

Pagbalao said he would get the sides of the Scout Rangers and the TFB before the CHR issued a preliminary report.

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Davao villagers slam banana plantation project near school

DAVAO CITY—RESIDENTS OF BAGANGAY Biao-on in Toril District are opposing plans by a banana company to establish a 12-hectare plantation near the Biao Elementary School there.

Parents and teachers of the students said the proposed plantation of AJMR Holdings Corp. was very close to the elementary school.

During recent consultations by the barangay there, the residents said the children's health would be put in jeopardy once the plantation began operations.

But Angelette Dalayan, group manager for technical services of AJMR, said "there is nothing to worry about."

"The company will be held accountable for anything bad that will happen to the children because of the operation of the plantation," Dalayan said.

Julie Baloso, president of the school's Barrens Teachers Association, said the plantation was only about 30 meters from the school.

"What we want is that our area is cleared and ready to be planted with bananas without a buffer zone. The plantation can start operations any time but we cannot see any sign that the company will ever put up a buffer zone," Baloso said.

Buffer zones are areas chiefly planted with trees and other vegetation that serve as protection against pesticide drift in agricultural plantation.

An angry parent assailed the company for allegedly not thinking about the health of the children.

An 11-year-old student and village official who allowed the entry of the banana firm should have thought of their welfare before deciding on the project.

"I am scared that's why I don't want the plantation here. They should move it somewhere. I am afraid that we will suffer from the chemicals that they would be using," the girl said.

"Can you assure [us] that when you spray your poisonous chemicals we will all be spared from it, especially those children? What if the children inhale those chemicals or they will be exposed to your chemicals?" Angie Lumbayan, a mother, said.

She said she will request for a transfer to other schools if the company insisted on pursuing up the plantation.

"I don't want to die early," she said.

The operation of the plantation would not endanger the lives of the children and that there was no need to put up a buffer zone, he said.

He cited how plantations in Bansalan Barangay in Davao del Sur, which he said have little residential area, are elementary school in the village. The same, he said, was the situation in their plantations in Davao del Norte and Compostela Valley Province.

"We've been operating in Bansalan Barangay for the last 10 years and we do not have a buffer zone. But no one complained about it ... no one demanded for a buffer zone because it is not needed," Dalayan said.

In an earlier round of consultation in Bansalan, Councilor Leo Avila, who sits as chair of the committee on environment and natural resources, said the company should establish a buffer zone before it starts planting.

Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Groups want Muslim cleric freed

COTABATO CITY—MORO MILITANT GROUPS here have demanded the release of a Muslim cleric who was allegedly wrongfully detained on suspicion of being a terrorist.

Ishak Saipul asin, deputy secretary-general of the Sunni Banguamoro, said Imam Akbar was also thoughts arrested because participating agenda who served him in did not have any warrant for his arrest.

"The arresting officers were not armed with a court order for Akmbar's arrest. Despite that, he was detained and is now being questioned," Amputuan said.

Akmbar was arrested on Thursday as he was disembarking from a passenger bus at around 7 p.m.

One of the arresting officers said Akmbar exhibited a terrorist suspect who was being hunted by the government.

Akmbar is not a terrorist and that he is a member of the militant United Youth for Peace and Development (UNPAD), Amputuan said.

He rejected the explanation given by authorities, saying similar incidents had repeatedly taken place in the past.

"Some other attendees were arrested in the past and every time an arrest is made, authorities give the same rotten suspect info," the said.

Amputuan said one of the arrested clerics was still suffering from trauma.

"That's the problem with our government. If you're against the policy and style of governance of the President, you are doomed to be classified as enemy of the state, either as terrorist, a rebel, a separatist or simply a militant and cause-oriented person susceptible to being a communist or a supporter," Amputuan, speaking in Filipino, told the bureau.

In General Santos City, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) said it would continue to fight despite the alleged mass-sponsored assassinations of militant leaders.

Bayan said in a statement its local militant leaders had received threats over the past few days.

They were Bill Andres, Bayan spokesperson, Bantayog Abdulaziz of Banguian, Bhaneha Sambo, Kalumba coordinator for Sultan Sumas, Joey Hamadoc of Anakbayan, and Joy Dumaya-ang of Gabriela in Kidapawan.

Andres said his group received the threats via text messages from an unidentified sender almost simultaneously, warning them of harm for being "communist supporters."

The death threats, he said, would serve as a check.

Since 2001, at least 249 left-wing activists have been killed in the country, according to human rights records. Charlie Inbon and Agaba Dimaan, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Safe drinking water offered to poor Palawan communities

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—A SINGLE DROP of water down not only give hope but is also a powerful instrument to assist people around the world.

The research come from Filipino-American Gemero Bulos, founder of A Single Drop (ASD), a US-based non-government organization helping communities have access to safe drinking water by promoting a water filter that uses only cheap materials, such as gravel and sand.

Bulos said she believed in water as an equalizer of life, saying in the fact that all living things—of any kind and of status in life—need water in order to live.

"Water can never be owned by any individual, or have a price," she claimed.

With the Philippines being rich in water resources, Bulos believed that problems stemming from lack of water should be addressed simply by tapping available resources.

By using cheap materials, Bulos said she could make drinking water accessible to the poor.

The Bicutan filter is being pilot tested in Quezon, Bataan and Davao's Perez.

Bulos said, there are some of the pilot areas because the community members themselves wanted potable water and the residents were willing and cooperative.

The installation and construction of the filter were swiftly done.

The Bicutan filter, she said, is a traditional slow sand filter being used in most commercialized water purifiers.

"It is simply a concrete container, with layers of sand and gravel inside it. The sand and gravel remove dirt, bacteria, viruses and parasites, and other impurities from the water," Bulos explained.

The Bicutan filter, she said, removes more than 90 percent of fecal coliform, 100 percent of protozoa and helminths, 60 to 99 percent of organic and inorganic contents, and up to 67 percent of iron and manganese. It also removes some suspended sediments in water.

The "affordable, simple and sustainable" filter, which can "produce up to 60 liters of filtered water per hour," could be used for many years, according to Bulos.

The technology gained approval and support from the Department of Health.

With the technology having passed through several scientific testing, Bulos looked forward for support from local governments since that would make the technology accessible for the poor communities.

A Single Drop marked Puerto Princesa but June through a workshop hosted by the Palawan NGO Network Inc. and co-sponsored by the Netherlands Global Green Action Network, while the Center for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology provided the trainers.

Bulos said the filter is easy to build as done by the participants in the workshop that brought together 18 persons from different towns in Palawan during the first set of workshops and 27 participants in the second set.

She said the filter would not directly compete with commercial water purifier makers as it is intended for the poor or "those who cannot afford to buy bottled water."

"The Bicutan technology also gives health workers an opportunity to go and speak up to the household level to tackle about hygiene," she said.

The Palawan NGO Network Inc., the partner NGO of A Single Drop, said the latter will open its office in Puerto Princesa City this month to make the project more accessible to the poor. Jojello Bonete, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

ARK of the COVENANT

Replica from Israel accepted by Dr. RICK WARREN with open arms and joy together with the Hallelujah Banner

The turnover of the Replica of the ARK OF THE COVENANT and the HALLELUJAH Banner to the men of God, Dr. RICK WARREN, Mrs. GRACE ILETO-REGATTINO, President, Prime Gold (PG) Power Ministries INC., Rev. Ed Silvoso of Harvest Evangelism, Rev. Gabriel Reyes and Rev. Alfred Metzger of Prayer Line (10:00 AM) at the National Prayer Retreat Congress held at CLTEX, July 28, 2006.

A GREAT COMMITMENT to A GREAT COMMANDMENT. A great commission will grow to a great church, indeed. Beyond was the year 2005 for Mr. Grace Valentino-Regatino and her company, ABS One Media International Corporation. As one of the first participants of Rick Warren's 40-day Purpose Driven Life, 96 Days and Saw 1,000 family units acquired and led to the Lordship not only but their lives more to be with the divine purpose, but more than the blessings they found in the book to others. 1000 Media, dramatically changed the lives of the Philippines. Philippines from ISRAEL Philippines MAP Revolution Messianic Apostolic Prophetic Summit 2006 September 7, 2006 Quirino Grandstand • Quezon City, Philippines September 8, 2006 Cebu Coliseum • Cebu City, Philippines September 9, 2006 Cebu Coliseum • Cebu City, Philippines

THE NEXT EVENT TO WATCH FOR: JOHN

The MANDATE of PG Power Ministries is to humbly touch our people and extend everyone about STAYING and LIVING in the PRESENCE of GOD, with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior to our hearts. The Ark of the Covenant is a TEACHING TOOL that points to the saving grace by faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and obedience to the laws lead to PRINCIPAL ORDER and PROSPERITY of men to the land, as Jesus said "I come not to abolish the law but to fulfill the law" (Mark 5:17).

For tickets of Philippines MAP Revolution Summit 2006, call the appointed: 426-8699 • 929-4933 • 929-4707 Landline: 981-8000

DEFEND LIFE

& HUMAN DIGNITY!

Let Justice and Peace Flow like Clear Waters!

We, advocates of peace, believe that there can be peace only when there is justice. In this light, we affirm that the right of a person to life, liberty and human dignity is inalienable and must be guaranteed and protected at all times. In the same vein, since human life is sacred and is an irreplaceable gift of God, we believe that a person could not be killed on the basis of his political beliefs and actual exercise of political freedoms.

We are deeply concerned then with the unbridled killing of political activists and leaders in the entire country. The pattern of impunity violates the very essence of the fundamental freedoms of expression and organization, and shows a clear disregard of due process and equal protection of the Constitution and international agreements on respect for human rights and civil liberties.

In Central Luzon alone, the people are being confronted by political repression that saw an unprecedented rise upon the deployment of Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan as Commanding Officer of the Philippine Army's 7th Infantry Division last September 2005. Last year alone, there were fifty (50) cases of summary killings, fourteen (14) frustrated killings, seven (7) desaparecidos, and countless arbitrary arrests, illegal searches, coercion and harassments. In the first half of 2006, there are already thirty (30) victims of summary execution and massacre, and thirty-four (34) persons missing, among other human rights abuses. Most of the victims are leaders and members of militant organizations and progressive party/list groups.

Reinforcing our apprehension is the President's declaration of all-out war and the subsequent allocation of the P1-B counter-insurgency fund. Such declaration laid the basis for the deployment of additional 500 troops by the AFP in Central Luzon. Currently, military detachments continue to mushroom even in urban areas like Angeles City, San Fernando City and Mabalacat, all in Pampanga, and in coastal areas like Malolos City, Hagonoy, Obando and Paombong in Bulacan.

As advocates of peace, we cannot just sit and watch as the masses are made to endure violations of their political rights, even as their very right to life continues to be violated by widespread landlessness, joblessness, poverty and hunger. The signs of the times call upon us to respond with prayers, vigilance and positive actions.

In this light, we strongly condemn the spate of political killings which is sowing great fear and uncertainty in the country today and specifically in our communities in Central Luzon.

We believe that political suppression and violence do not manifest strength but are manifestations of weak and ineffective governance.

We call on our local and national government officials, especially President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, to stop the escalation of violence, demoralization, dehumanization and political killings that darken our people's lives. We strongly suggest that an independent body be formed to investigate, prosecute and punish those found guilty.

Peace is the goal of all we do;
Love leads to justice on the earth;
Let justice flow like waters clear,
So we may see the world's rebirth.

(Douglas Clark)

We appeal that the P1-B counter-insurgency fund allocated by President Arroyo be rechannelled to basic social services and other essential concerns.

We earnestly urge the government to squarely face our country's social ills and find solutions through the negotiating table.

As we commit ourselves to work more vigorously for the defense of life and human dignity, we call on all human rights advocates, our religious sisters and brothers, and all concerned citizens for greater vigilance and collective action for justice and peace in defense of our freedoms and democracy.

Building peace is upholding human dignity and promoting fullness of life. Let us be one in defending life and human dignity! LET JUSTICE AND PEACE FLOW LIKE CLEAR WATERS!

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Floods destroy bridge in N. Cotabato

COTABATO CITY—THE ROAD LINKING Davao and Cotabato cities has been cut off after a 60-meter bridge in Makilala, North Cotabato collapsed on Friday dawn.

Shah Rook triggered by heavy rains destroyed a 12-meter portion of the Binatar Bridge, affecting its basic withstands.

The floods also washed away and killed three members of a family, according to radio station dxBO of Kidapawan City.

Residents reported that a Manila Cebu car driven by Danilo Tevarez was swept away by rampaging waters and fell off the bridge into the creek. The driver has remained missing.

Engineer Pete Salas of the North Cotabato provincial engineering office said it could take some time to repair the bridge.

He was an engineering workers have commenced on the establishment of a detour bridge to restore traffic flow.

While the bridge is impassable, commuters can take the Makilala-Arakan-General Santos City route to Davao City.

Jun Adam, Cotabato office manager of Weena Transport, the line has 10 trips plying the Cotabato-Davao route, said the firm continued operations from Cotabato City to the vicinity of Barangay Ricardo.

Commuters have to transfer to another Weena bus that will take them to Davao City and vice versa.

Binatar is located at the southern part of the slope of Mount Apo, the country's highest peak.

Heavy Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Pifol has directed the provincial engineering office to check other bridges, especially those along the main highway, to prevent similar occurrences.

Killed

In Bukidnon Provincial, four persons, including two children, died while asleep as water swamping their sleeping quarters swept them in their crossed to their early Wednesday morning.

Ted Sahagun, Misamis Oriental social welfare officer, said Ronald Arevano and his wife Anna Blanie were crossing the Bukidnon River in Barangay Lindo when it suddenly swelled and engulfed them.

He said the couple's children—Heil, 7, and Ivy, 3—drowned.

The Arevanos were trying to flee the rising floodwaters, triggered by intermittent rains which have affected Barangay Magsaysay.

He said the overflowing Bukidnon River destroyed a dike system in Bagontapes and submerged two more villages in nearby Lapanday town.

The provincial government earlier identified those areas as flood- and landslide-prone.

A torrential rainfall last for hours will surely result in flood," Sahagun said.

Early this week, the provincial government ordered the relocation of residents living in flood-prone areas and along riverbanks because of high risk of flash floods and landslides.

But Sahagun said most of the residents did not heed the order.

Misamis Oriental Gov. Oscar Moreno said in over 30 families had fled Magsaysan as the floodwaters swept away 18 shanties in the area.

The families sought refuge at the Bukidnon Elementary School, he said.

Sahagun said damage to the flood damage at P50 million in property, infrastructure and farm crops.

Kidlapawan alone, which is one of the main suppliers of vegetables in Manila, 17 hectares of vegetable farms and a poultry and livestock farm were destroyed. Edwin B. Hernandez and Grace Daniel-Illanes, PDI Mindanao Bureau

SEVEN SEEN—Maya in Cordillera in Pampanga remainscenter-wear after Typhoon "Henry" hit the town last week. (INQUIRER)

Kids break piggy banks to save girl

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—MARIA LUISA ISABEL ANG television broadcaster called on kids in her program to save the life of a young girl, people from all walks of life in the city and neighboring towns responded, most of them preferring monetary.

Isabel Avila, host of the "Pag-usapan Natin" daily morning program aired over cable DYAS, described the response to her calls to help Yasmin Gwyneth Arandilla as "a testament to the generosity of many Filipinos, even somewhere out of their inherent compassion."

The young girl, of Purok Sarso in Barangay Isabang, was accidentally hit in the head by a stray bullet from a .45-cal. pistol fired by an off-duty policeman neighbor identified as Florante Miranda Jr., in the evening of July 26.

Gwyneth was rushed to the Lucena United Doctors Hospital and immediately underwent operation. Her skull was severely damaged by the bullet.

Avila said he was shocked when he learned of the incident.

"How could a little girl like Gwyneth suffer that much from the stupidity of another person? It's simply terrifying," I told myself. I couldn't take this sitting down. The line can very well take this cause as its corporate support. But I have to do something to help the young girl, which I believe probably saved her father," he said.

When the suspect was hiring for gun, the girl's father, Eddie, was about to step out of the house to request the neighbor to stop firing because his daughter's asleep. But he was shot instead.

As the little girl played, Miranda fired another shot to the ground, but the bullet hit a stray, ricocheted, and hit Gwyneth.

"Had the girl's father confronted the drunken neighbor, he could have been shot, too," he said.

When he learned of the big amount needed to cover the girl's medical expenses, Avila immediately appealed for help through his program.

The response almost duplicated the earlier storm of concern he received after he appealed for help for typhoon victims of Northeastern Luzon.

Since Thursday, when he first made the appeal, Avila's program was swamped by phone calls from viewers, bankers, members, employees and many other good Samaritans.

"Most responded anonymously," he said.

Consuelo Arandilla, a building tenant from Cubi, Pampanga, Avila, called the station and vowed to pay for the girl's medical bill, which totaled P1,000. He also condemned the suspect for irresponsible hiring of the gun.

Many little girls came to the TV station and donated their coin savings. One of them, 8-year-old classmate Jacqueline Cruz, even broke her piggy bank and donated her entire P600 savings to help save Gwyneth. It's one of the most touching moments of the media person," said Avila.

His homestay brothers and sisters from the Alpha Phi Omega also joined the list.

The unending drama, Arandil Aguete, who received his medical bill, facilitated the getting of a discount by the hospital.

On Friday, Avila handed over P65,000 to the father of the victim, while co-operation to cooperate pointing jobs for a living.

But the medical treatment is still a long way to go. We need more generous donors to save the child," he decided.

THREE-YEAR-OLD Gwyneth Arandilla at the intensive care unit of the Lucena United Doctors Hospital. (LUCENA NEWS-EX)

NPA rebels in Quezon warn abusive officials

LUCENA CITY—NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA) rebels in Quezon have warned local government officials not to abuse their positions and stop committing "anti-revolutionary activities" to avoid assassination by them.

"We do not have qualms to enforce punishment against governmental officials found guilty beyond reasonable doubt by the people's court on charges of plunder, grave violations of human rights, environmental destruction and wrong practices of criminal syndicates like those four illegal drugs," Armida de Guia, spokesperson of the 580th Apolinario Mendoza Command (AMC), said in his five-phone townlines with this media.

But De Guia did not disclose if they already had the list of abusive local officials.

He said his group didn't know yet of any local politicians that reportedly bought and opposed the revolutionary movement.

On Monday, Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines' Military Commission ordered the NPA to unshackle "enemy" policemen and government officials, aside from other new combat plans that had been spelled out in its message titled "Major Drive in the Tir for Tir Struggle against the 119-declared Year of Terror."

De Guia brushed aside the threat of new dawdlers Lacson-Sotto senatorial bond Maj. Gen. Victor Ibrado, who is currently attends on communist guerrillas in the region.

"There is nothing new to it, since the dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos and up to Arroyo's term, Ibrados are used to be known as the engineer of heavy deployment of Soldiers Under Terror. In fact, we oppose the arrival of more enemies in the area," he said.

De Guia believed the Army's capability to launch the administration's so-called "counterinsurgency campaign.

He said it would not be enough for the military and police to scour the entire Quezon area.

He claimed that from November to July, the NPA guerrillas staged 53 attacks on government troops, majority in Quezon and "demobilized" at least 40 Army soldiers and policemen.

Solicitor spokesperson Jerry Maj. Jose Ibrado, however, scoffed at De Guia's figures.

"With the low morale experienced by most NPA rebels nationwide due to successive blows being inflicted against them, those newly recruited NPA spokesmen nationwide have all been ousted. Figures we receive a violent, one intruder," Ibrado said.

Killed

In Cagle, suspected communist rebels shot dead an Army officer while riding a tricycle in Barangay Ibrados.

Capt. Abdulaziz Mutia died from 14 bullet wounds after he was attacked in the town proper of Dumaran, 60 km south of Roxas City, at around 6 p.m., said Maj. Lyndon Soliven, spokesperson of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division.

Soliven said two men armed with .45 cal. handguns approached Mutia, who was in civilian clothes, as he was about to board a motorcycle and shot him. They took his .45 cal. pistol, radio and cellular phone, he said.

Witnesses also saw at least five other persons who acted as lookouts. The killers retreated toward the hinterland villages of Dumaran.

Mutia was dead on arrival at the Dumaran District Hospital.

"The mode of killing is similar to a carrier by the NPA Sparrow Unit," Soliven said. He declined to elaborate.

The victim, reportedly a native of Bantigue City, handled the Civilian Military Operations (CMO) of the 12th Infantry Battalion based in Mingo, Bohol and formerly assigned in Dumaran under the 3rd Division Reconnaissance Company, said Soliven.

The Army unit condemned the killing. Soliven said Mutia "upheld the human rights" even of captured and wounded NPA rebels.

He said Mutia, who received soldiers who clashed with rebels in Dumaran in 2004, pushed for the hospitalization of a rebel who was wounded and captured.

Troops of the 47th Infantry Battalion were pursuing the rebels. *Bobbie Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Walter Burgos Jr. and Felipe Celera, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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ROUNDUP

Bomb threat at Dole

CALAMBA CITY—Investigators of the regional office of the Department of Labor and Employment in Barangay Parian here after an unidentified caller had told an employee that a bomb was planted in the workplace on Tuesday, City police chief Supt. Rolando Rodino said on Sunday.

The Explosive Ordnance Division of Camp Rizalino Pisan in Biñan, Laguna sent both local policemen and three bomb-sniffing dogs, inspected the whole building for three hours but found nothing. *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Teacher's body found

BACOLOD CITY—The bloated body of a high school teacher, believed to have been raped and killed, was found in an irrigation canal in Hda. Consuelo, Barangay Mandalagan, Bago City in Negros Occidental on Wednesday. The body was identified by brother of Eileen Rose Cayetano Barcenas, 33, of Barangay Pilar, Hinigaran town, a teacher of the Felicesimo Baptist Church in Bacolodgrande, police said. Barcenas was reportedly stabbed to an unidentified animals killing an estimate ran in front of the boarding house in Bacolodgrande at about 8 p.m. Tuesday, and had been some where. Wilfredo Rendon Bacolod reported. Bago police chief Supt. Alex Delvento said he believed the woman was raped and killed in another area and her body was dumped in Mandalagan.
Carlo Cuevas, PDI Visayas Bureau

Films vs child abuse

CITY OF DAVAO—Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, in a Puerto Galera-based non-government organization, has been using animation films to raise public consciousness on child sexual abuse prevention. Among those films are "The Daughter," a video on incest, which won at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival for best educational/children award and a Special Jury award, and "A Good Boy," a short video on pedophilia. Social worker Antonio Bayate said that in a community in Puerto Galera, there were 15 children reported to his victims of sexual abuse while another 16 girls in San Isidro, Tanjuman, Puerto Galera, suffered the same abuse.
Mariano Rivera, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

MILF leader slain

COTABATO—Unidentified gunmen killed a ranking commander of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) during an ambush in Pagalungan, Maguindanao, Lt. Col. Johnny Basa, chief of the Army's 40th Infantry Battalion, said Miru Kashim, commander of the 105th Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces based in Barangay Bagoinged, was on his way home aboard a single motorcycle on Sunday morning when suspect/s fired at him and multiple bullet wounds to the body. Basa said the helmet must have been targeted by a grudge involving relation and another group.
Joel Boy Mallari, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Execs linked to job rackets

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Some government officials here are under surveillance for illegal recruitment and human trafficking, but Chief Insp. Ronald Allonzanes of the Philippine Council on Transnational Crime (PCTC) here refused to name them. Allonzanes said the identities and details of the officials' involvement were disclosed by the victims. "I bring illegal documents in one of their carpenter," he said. The PCTC is attending to 180 cases lodged by overseas workers this office. "Many are still undecided because the victims or the families are either under-seized or afraid to report," he said.
Julie Alcala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

2 soldiers hurt in clash

Ilo, Zamboanga— Two Army soldiers were wounded when their unit clashed with communist rebels in Barangay Ma. Rita in Mauricio town on Monday, Cpt. Jonnel Leonin said Ma. Rita Cardinal were brought to the President Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Hospital here. Reports reaching the Zamboanga police operations center in Camp Cornelio Najarro said the fight started at around noon. Five hours later, some 500 soldiers from the 46 mp to 2400 infantry battalion were on the hunging gunfire with 200 rebels. In a hostile area in Mauricio, police said
Omar Villa, PDI Central Luzon Desk

NPA leader slain

CAMP MAGSAYSAY, Nueva Ecija—A New People's Army leader was killed in a clash with government soldiers in Baler, Zambales, on Thursday. Lt. Col. Rolando Bautista, commander of the 7th Infantry Brigade, said the slain rebel was believed to be a top official because his backpack contained valuable intelligence documents. The body was turned over to officials of Dimalupihan, Bataan, Zambales said. The battle between government troops and about 40 rebels broke out at 10 a.m. in Barangay Bahaan in Baler at the boundary of Pamplonga, Bataan and Zambales.
Bobbie Mallari, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Gawad Kalinga to build relocation houses

PANGIL, Laguna—The Gawad Kalinga Community Development Foundation offered to build houses for the 109 families whose dwellings in Barangay Bambo here were razed during a demolition. Mario Paz Cortes, GK municipal planning and management coordinator, said the group was planning a 3,311-sqm relocation site along the boundary of Bambo and Barangay Maabakla. Matilda Iwin Stella, a member of the Task Force Barangay Bambo Mountain Rehabilitation, said 51 homeowners, who must urgently transfer, will have their lands completed in two to three months.
Roman Pedis, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

3 NPA rebels slain in Davao Sur clash

DAVAO, Philippines—Government troops killed three New People's Army (NPA) rebels in an operation in the hinterland of Kiblawan town, Davao del Sur on Thursday afternoon, Brig. Gen. Alfredo Cayton, 10th Infantry Division commander, said Friday. Cayton said the rebels were identified as members of the Army's 68th Infantry Battalion after the 45-minute armed encounter in Sitio Lati, Barangay Amalan in Kiblawan. Cayton said they sacrificed the operation after about 40 NPA guerrillas were reported in the area.
Jaymie Jonar, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Negros planter exec gets jail term

BACOLOD CITY—For not paying P500,000 worth of sugar executed to him by a sugar mill nine years ago, the president of a sugar planters' group in southern Negros Occidental was sentenced on up to 11 years in prison by the regional trial court of Cadiz City.

Executive Judge Ramon Muñoz on July 26 found Manuel Belmonte Cossing, president and manager of the United Negros Planters Association, guilty of estafa for failing to pay for the sugar production and other agricultural and aquacultural businesses in the province.

Sentence

Cossing received a prison sentence of 6-11 years and ordered to pay the company P944,820.60, representing the unpaid proceeds of his sugar quotas.

The court also cancelled the bail posted by Cossing and ordered him on his continuously brought to the national penitentiary in Muntinlupa.

A co-accused, Sebastian Arroyo, the auditor of the association, was acquitted for insufficient evidence.

According to the court, Cossing defrauded Sandico Hermanos Inc. of "P" or domestic sugar valued at P944,820.60 on June 11, 1997. Sugar quotas or supply certificates were delivered to Limbian, represented by Cossing, to be sold to the National Food Authority.

Instead of remitting the proceeds of the sale of the sugar to Sandico Hermanos, Cossing appropriated portions of the amount for his own benefit, the court ruled. He "deliberately feigned that he could no longer account for the total proceeds," Muñoz said. *Carla Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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A PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD officer gets one of two 24-m search-and-rescue vessels ready for the trip to Lebanon to ferry the Filipino nuns to safety (Story on Page A12)

Int'l team here to probe killings of local activists

By Luige A. del Puerto

A VISITING INTERNATIONAL TEAM OF HUMAN rights advocates has begun a three-day inquiry into the alleged killing of Filipino activists by state agents.

The visit followed calls by the academe and local groups to bring the reported assassinations to the attention of the international community, particularly the United Nations, where the Philippines holds a seat on its human rights council.

Police last week acknowledged that the issue had reached the international arena but cautioned the public against propaganda that was being "manufactured overseas."

Militants and some 10 farmers, doctors and teachers from the United States, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Japan, Ukraine, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Indonesia began on Sunday their visit to Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog, where most cases of alleged extrajudicial killings had been recorded.

"They will help expose (the killings) to the international community, and to their own governments, institutions and rights groups so they would take it seriously on what is happening here," said Carl Ala, spokesperson of the leftist Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

Ala said the delegates, who were expected to wrap up their probe on Aug. 8, would submit their findings to the House, the Senate, the Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations.

Since President Macapagal-Arroyo assumed office in 2001, some 245 activists had been murdered, according to an NGO tally. Bayanmuna, a leftist rights group, placed the number at 720.

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, last week urged Ms Arroyo to form an independent body to probe the murders.

"It is ironic to see the continuing gross violations of human rights happening almost on a daily basis, while the Philippine government claims with pride that it was elected as a member of the (UN) Human Rights Council and that it has an Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act," Tauli-Corpuz said.

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Parañaque protects city's winged visitors

City gov't plans to turn La Huerta, Tambo mangroves into bird sanctuaries

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THOUSANDS OF TRANSIENTS IN SMALL-bodied City serve most of a permanent basis.

The homebirds, however, are of the feathered kind—birds frequently sighted in the city like the Chinese Egrets, Black-crowned Night Herons, Kentish plovers, Curlew Sandpipers and Siberian Ruby Throats, among others.

According to Jo Orozco, city tourism officer in charge, Parañaque has been eyeing two mangrove areas that could serve as a haven for its "guests." These are in Barangay La Huerta and the mudflats in Barangay Tambo called "Freedom Island," just off the Coastal Road.

"The one in Barangay La Huerta has been officially declared as a bird sanctuary," Orozco told the business in an interview.

The property, donated by the Public Estates Authority (PEA) to the city government, covers around five to seven hectares, she added.

Bird haven

It would soon be developed into a bird haven, complete with viewing towers, boardwalks, educational centers and a park where bird lovers, watchers and photographers alike could move, that is, if plans of the local government would push through with the help of the Philippine Bird Club (PBC) of the Philippines.

A similar plan has also been drawn up for the 25-ha "Freedom Island," where more than 82 species of birds have been sighted, as recorded by the WBC, since January 2005.

The property, however, has yet to be placed under the care of the local government. "The PEA has yet to identify which part of the land will be turned over to the government so the property rights is still with them," Orozco said.

The WBC, in a letter to the city government's Special Services Office, has suggested that Parañaque jointly declare the island, with the Las Piñas government, a protected area.

"We have learned that Las Piñas Representative Cynthia Villar has plans of declaring the part of the island that lies in Las Piñas as a protected area," said Michael Lu, the club's president, in his letter dated Dec. 21, 2005.

Over 80 species

Out of the 82 bird species on Freedom Island, 46 were classified as avian birds. 20 belonged to the grassland variety and the rest were associated with wetlands.

About 30 percent of the bird species were rare, said the project proposal prepared by the Coastal and Marine Management Division of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-National Capital Region.

"This is considered as a relatively high percentage for a very small urban locality like Barangay Tambo. Among the rare birds that could be found in the area include the globally threatened Chinese Egret and the Solitary Chestnut-bulge Throat," said the agency.

It also said that the municipality was a very important stopover for the hundred thousand or so migratory water birds during winter in neighboring countries.

The agency also identified the area as one of the remaining pastures of Water thistle that has maintained its mangrove cover, which serve as a capture for various marine organisms such as fish, crabs and shrimps.

Natural shield

"Without mangroves, our shorelines and coastal communities would lose their natural shield against typhoons and other natural calamities," the agency said.

In 2004, the city council, led by Councilor Carlito Asumpcion, came up with an ordinance declaring the area as a bird sanctuary, renovating the power of local government units to enact ordinances to protect its environment under Republic Act 7160.

The proposed law prohibited the "cutting and harvesting of mangroves and other plant species; the killing of wildlife species; the collecting, hunting or possession of wildlife, their by-products and derivatives; reporting and entrapping any portion of the sanctuary and the gathering or destroying of active nests or nests."

Any person caught violating the law will be fined P5,000 or face imprisonment of one to six months.

However, the proposed ordinance has been gathering dust after the councilors passed it

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Convert soccer fields into parking lots, BF asks school execs

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE REGISTRATION WOULD definitely not sit well with football fanatics. However, some said measure would be delightful.

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando yesterday suggested that large private schools located along major roads in the metropolis raze their football fields and use it as parking lots.

This, he pointed out, would help solve the perennial traffic problem in areas surrounding schools.

Instead of football, school officials should just encourage their students to ride up ops, Fernando said in jest.

"Ops commuter less space so if they play ops involved of football, they would use the field as a parking area," the MMDA chair added.

Seriously, though

Fernando, however, reiterated that he was serious about asking school officials to turn their football fields into parking areas for students' vehicles. He particularly cited the schools located near Ortigas Avenue in Mandaluyong City and on Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City—considered the busiest roads in Metro Manila during the school year.

"That's a serious suggestion. [Bring that] fans been a necessity for a long time now. I have told them [school authorities] about this because we really have to do something about the traffic problem," Fernando said in a phone interview yesterday.

Problem areas

The MMDA considers as problem areas the portion of Ortigas Avenue near the De La Salle University and the stretch of Katipunan Avenue in front of the Ateneo de Manila University.

"It is part of the social responsibility of schools because there is a public clamor for this problem to be solved," he added.

Fernando said traffic headaches have been a constant sight on Ortigas and Katipunan Avenues, particularly during the times when students are dropped off or fetched from school.

"They (school officials) have done something about it, and have set aside parking spaces inside, but it is still not enough. I am hoping that we can involve their civic spirit. I am confident the suggestion will affect some action," Fernando said in the interview.

Suggestion shelved

Traffic-jams near school zones in Metro Manila have been a major problem for the MMDA. As early as 2002, the agency has suggested that schools implement a scheme where students would be dropped off in a common area and then shuttled to the campus, preventing the piling up of school-bound vehicles on major roads. The idea, however, was shelved after parents expressed concerns over their children's safety.

FERNANDO

Two hurt in Muntinlupa fire

By Tarra V. Quismundo

FED BY HUGE FLAMMABLE materials, a fire quickly engulfed two establishments in Muntinlupa City yesterday, leaving two workers injured and causing P5 million worth of damage to properties.

The fire, which broke out at 11:34 a.m., fired Jet Plastics Corp., a car paint shop, and then spread to Golden Bubble Corp., a furniture store in Tejeros Compound, an industrial area in Barangay Putatan.

Fire Officer 2 Marlon Ibanez, senior investigator of the Muntinlupa Fire Station, said a security guard of the paint shop reported the fire which began in the rear of the two-storey building.

Jets thought the shop was closed, for they as employees were at the condominium. Two of them—Jose Ibes Ilao and Jose Sierra Espiritu—sustained minor burns in the arms as they tried to douse the flames using fire extinguishers.

The two were given first aid before they were rushed to a nearby hospital, Ibanez said. The three other workers were reported to be safe.

The blaze quickly spread to the adjacent furniture shop, fueled by highly combustible paints, Nelton Montero, Bureau of Fire worker raised the alarm to Task Force Bravo, one of the highest alert levels which requires fire fighters from other stations and detachments around Metro Manila to rush to the scene.

Ibanez said some 27 fire trucks, including those from six other Fire brigades and from the barracks of Bilibid and Sta. Rosa in Laguna, rushed to the site and worked together until the fire was put out by 3:30 p.m.

LOOKING FOR A CATCH

A man tries his luck at catching fish in Manila Bay early yesterday morning. He is one of many out there despite Korea Expressway Corp.'s decision to close the bay to anyone who wants to catch fish—and fish and other signs like it.

Gas station in Pasig reopens

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE SMALL GAS STATION A FEW METERS away from the biggest public market in Pasig City has finally reopened almost three months after it was closed following a gas spill.

The Sea Oil gasoline station in Barangay Dalandan resumed operations on Friday afternoon, about three months after more than 500 liters of unleaded gasoline spilled from one of its underground storage tanks.

Partial compliance

The company has partially complied with the requirements—applications for permits and ordinances of repairs—the environment officials had set, City Environment and Natural Resources Chief Virginia Nicolasora said the bayonne.

The spill occurred on July 24 while a private chemistry tanker was refilling one of the two underground storage tanks of the station located at the corner of Market Avenue and Bolivar Street.

The employees refilling the storage tank kept on pacing to move gasoline although it was already full, causing the gas to spill out onto the street.

Fireman to the rescue

Firefighters rushed to the area and scooped up the gas using pails, reported that it would flow into the canals and reagent accumulation.

The company later continued the cleanup but two weeks after the incident, the District reported that 200 liters of gas were still unaccounted for.

The company has already recovered half of the 500 liters while the other half went into the drainage," Nicolasora said.

Go-signal

Still, with recent tests in the area showing that the level of hydrocarbons was already below the standard, the Environment and Natural Resources issued the company a permit to operate, she added.

But the company will still have to pay fines for various penalties. The station is also required to install oil and water separators as well to find another private debris hauler with the necessary permits, Nicolasora said the bayonne.

Makati jail inmates complete IT training

By Tarra V. Quismundo

FOR THOSE IMAGES, A CHANCE to a better life was offered to those who inside the detention facility.

A total of 115 inmates of the Makati City Jail (MCJ) have just completed a 20-day computer literacy training program which was conducted behind bars.

Computer 101

Under the program, prisoners who know little or absolutely nothing about operating a computer were taught basic applications such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Paint, the virtual drawing program.

The 40-hour information technology (IT) training also taught them how to explore the Internet as well as how to create and send text e-mail.

New hope

"The city government hopes that with their newly-acquired skills, the inmates will be able to rebuild their lives upon their release," Makati Vice Mayor Jejomar Binay (SK) chair Christine Mercado said in a statement.

The in-house training program is the MCJ began in January through the efforts of the IBI, the city-supported employment program Makati Training Placement and Livelihood Councils and the Interior Welfare and Development Unit, the MCJ's rehabilitation arm.

Those who completed the program were automatically qualify for "higher level training" such as web page design and graphic design, according to City Hall.

Parañaque protects . . .

Parañaque #23

AN ORDINANCE proposed by the City Council calls for the protection of Parañaque's fine-feathered visitors.

on bird-watching two years ago.

"When we followed it up with the city council, they said the ordinance was still in the committee level," Ocampo said, adding that the ordinance, if approved on final reading, would help expedite registrations with PEA.

Recently, the City Tourism Office has discovered that a billboard at the back of SM Sucat has become a feeding ground for egrets and tapsters.

As early as 5 a.m., the pond would be dotted with hundreds or hundred egrets that feed on crustaceans coming from the Las Piñas River.

Buck Fresco, city tourism operations supervisor, said the billboard was part of the roughly 200 salt beds that dominated the coastal communities of the barangays of Sucat-Tejeros.

But the salt beds that were converted into fishponds during the rainy season have been swallowed up by buildings and subdivisions over the years.

Construction threatens egrets

Binay said that the opening expansion of I-S, linking the cities of Parañaque and Las Piñas to other localities, might encroach on the fishpond, a privately-owned property. The road construction is just a few meters away from the egret sanctuaries.

"Development really poses a great threat to these birds' safe and habitat," he pointed out as he hoped that city council would speed up the approval of the ordinances in order to protect "Feminism Island" from hunters and other persons who may disrupt the bird sanctuary.

"We can't allow them away because sometimes, even our personnel are not allowed to enter the property," Binay said.

Binay added that he was optimistic that the council would soon act on the ordinance "because we want the future generations to see birds in the skies rather than in cages."

133 minors apprehended in Makati for violating curfew

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE STREETS OF MAKATI CITY are no place for children at night time.

The local government announced the other day that teenagers out-of-town upper-bracket 133 individuals last month for violating its curfew ordinance which imposed a curfew on individuals aged 18 and below.

Under the ordinance, minors in the city should be safely inside their homes from 10 p.m. up to 4 a.m.

Those apprehended were detained overnight at special holding cells for teenagers built and released the following day due to their parents or guardians.

According to the Makati Information and Community Relations Division, the teenagers with the most number of violations were from Barangay Comembo, by with 47, followed by Valenzuela, 27, Sta. Cruz, 22, San Isidro, 16, Pitogo, 7 and South Cembo, 6.

Mayor Jejomar Binay, in a statement, the other day, ordered the arrest for minors to be kept out of the streets at nighttime to prevent incidents of juvenile offense involving truancy and teenage gangs.

The was also the reason for the approval of the ordinance by PGMA during the visit of Binay's wife, Elenita. The ordinance was first enacted in 1993 through Metropolis Ordinance 27.

METRO BRIEFS

Homes for homeless

ABOUT 70 families in Las Piñas City would soon have permanent homes. City Hall said yesterday. The families are members of the 2,936-unit San Roque relocated following the Payatas tragedy. The families would soon receive free land certificates after Mayor Imelda Aguilar and formerly moved to Aurora Boulevard and Quirino Avenue signed an agreement to transfer ownership of the 6.6-hectare property to the families. The relocated would be given a "subdivision for" community. Roads, drainage systems, health and sanitation centers would also be constructed in the subdivision. The local government's "Lupa Para sa Mamamayan" program has already benefited about 13,000 informal settlers

— Jocelyn R. Uy

Facelift for stadium

A "FACELIFT" awaits the Quezon Sports Complex in Quezon City, as city officials begin preparing for the commencement of the Philippine Sea Games (SEA Games) in December. The refurbishment of the 40-year-old complex in Barangay Philsoniabot is set to begin soon, particularly the rehabilitation of the multi-purpose oval, according to city officials. The Association Multi-purpose Hall ... should no longer look like a mere basketball court," said Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. Aside from being the site of sports activities, the hall shall also serve as a stage where theatrical plays can be performed, he added.

— DJ Yap

DID YOU KNOW

THE MAROONED of the Philippines, which was elected by college students as one "hell now this week" and was created in June 14, 1898 by the late Dr. Jose P. Rizal of the First Philippine Legislature. It is the first secretariat and to which is found to be still ruled by its founders. The PIP now has campuses in Diliman, Ateneo, Angeles campus), Los Baños, Manila, Visayas, Mindanao and Baguio. It has 1,000 members. Click here to apply for admission to the Philippines' first multi-campus distance learning to answer university.

— Cyril J. Arambulo, PID Research

PNP intelligence chief likely to become Metro police chief

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE's number-two man has virtually confirmed that Director Reynaldo Esmilla, currently the police's intelligence czar, will replace Director Nolal Quezel as chief of the National Capital Region Police Office.

Quezel is retiring early this month.

Asked who would assume Quezel's post, Deputy Director Avelino Razon Jr., the PNP's second highest official, mentioned only the name of Esmilla, although he said there were "some other candidates."

Told that his remark more or less indicated Esmilla's impending designation as Metro Manila police chief, Razon said, "Probably, it is the correct interpretation."

Esmilla's assumption to one of the PNP's most coveted field posts is expected to trigger a reshuffle which would affect at least five units.

Assuming Esmilla gets the post, this is how other officers will move in the hierarchy, according to Razon:

Director Alejandrino Lapitid, now the chief of the Directorate for Research and Development, will replace Esmilla as head of the Directorate for Intelligence.

Chief Supt. Nestor Bebe, current chief of the PNP Crime Laboratory, will take over Lapitid's post.

Chief Supt. Ingrie Sargunan, the deputy chief of the Directorate for Plans, will head the PNP Crime Laboratory.

The director of the Aviation Police Division (PPD), Chief Supt. Charlemagne Alejandrino, is expected to take over Sargunan's post at the planning office.

On the other hand, Chief Supt. Lauro Thomas, executive officer of the Directorate for Plans, has been recommended to head the ITD which covers the cities of Mandaluyong, Pasig and Marikina and the town of San Juan.

Director Jesus Versoza, one of the officers slated to replace Quezel, will remain as chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, the police's investigative arm, Razon said.

The CIDG is in the thick of the probe to unmask the alleged 9 narcicos and civilian backers of the attempt to smear President Macapagal-Arroyo last February.

"There is much work now on the desk of Director Versoza," Razon said.

Razon also disclosed that the Senior Officers Placement and Promotion Board has passed a resolution recommending three officers to head the Manila Police District, a plum post.

They included Chief Supt. Isidoro "Bong" Rosales, Senior Supt. Nilo Ann Cruz and Chief Supt. Leandro Delmoro.

But the police would have to wait for the nod of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

PNP chief Director General Oscar Calderon has already written to Atienza about the shortlist.

"He (Atienza) has yet to act on the recommendation," Razon said.

For the meantime, Senior Supt. Danilo Atienzaa, the deputy of the MPD, has been designated as officer-in-charge of the district following the retirement of Chief Supt. Bebe Belaing.

Go indigenous, doctor tells breastfeeding moms

By Margaux C. Orea

A NONGOVERNMENT ORGANization is now pushing for the revival of indigenous practices during breastfeeding activities.

Lactation consultant and Children for Breastfeeding, Inc. founding chair Dr. Gloria Fenaros Esguerra has stressed that a woman and her baby should eat indigenous foods, especially vegetables rich in calcium.

"Calcium from cows' milk is common in cold places, not in tropical countries like ours, where indigenous foods are more abundant," Esguerra explained during a recent lecture in celebration of Breastfeeding Week.

"The doctor enumerated examples of calcium-rich local vegetables and grains like unpolished rice, malitsa (*Amaranthus spinosus*, *amaranth*), kamote tops, kamalig (*Justicia gendarussa*), kinchoy, sesame seeds, kulitis (*Celosia argentea Linn.*), saluyot (*Jute leaves*), singkamas (*turnips*), okra and talong (*eggplant*).

She also said that malnutrition preparations like ginisbisi and dinengdeng from the northern part of the country, the Ilocano version of lugaw, lomi, lauya and nilupasan from the southern areas could supplement breastfeeding.

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ABS HERBS

UPRUCING UP EDSA A worker of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority applies a fresh coat of paint to the underbelly of the Edsa Shrine in Ortigas Payat Avenue, Makati City. The MMDA is currently repainting all flyovers on Edsa.

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DARK CLOUDS ON HORIZON

A man fishes along Victoria Harbor under the background of a stormy Hong Kong skyline, Aug. 1. A new law threatens civil liberties in the island. AFP

Hong Kong gets more power to spy on citizens

HONG KONG—HONG KONG'S LEGISLATURE on Sunday passed a new law giving authorities more power to tap phones and conduct other surveillance measures, a move critics fear will curtail civil liberties in the former British colony now ruled by China.

Hong Kong's pro-democracy opposition boycotted the final vote as the lawmakers debate that began Wednesday ended early Sunday morning, after a proposed provision to reconsider the law have was defeated.

The surveillance bill passed 33-0. The opposition holds 24 seats in the 60-member legislature. The bill had been largely expected to pass while backing from pro-government lawmakers who control the body.

Critics have expressed concern that the new surveillance legislation will empower police officers to eavesdrop on political opponents, although the government has insisted it won't.

Apart from phone tapping, the bill also covers interception of mail and e-mail, as well as physical surveillance, such as undercover infiltration.

Journalist groups fear authorities can now intercept conversations between reporters and their sources, or lawyers and their clients.

Opposition legislator James To said the government was unresponsive to critics' worries.

"This was like debating with a wall," he grumbled during the final hours of debate.

"The passage of this bill will affect us greatly. The level of disappointment we feel isn't a normal level of disappointment," said march organizer Lewisham. Margaret Ng.

Hong Kong Secretary for Security Ambrose Lee said the new law is enacted for the territory's public safety.

"I want emphasize that this piece of legislation is very important to maintain the good law and order of Hong Kong," he said after the bill's passage.

"I wish to assure the residents of Hong Kong that the law now is a good balance between effective law enforcement on the one hand and the protection of privacy on the other," Lee added.

The law requires surveillance operations to be approved by judges appointed by Hong Kong's leader. Opposition legislators argue such a system of checks isn't independent enough.

Among other safeguards, the law creates an oversight committee, also appointed by the territory's leader, and authorizes the official to order the government to pay compensation to individuals whose privacy rights have been violated.

Another area of concern is that surveillance conducted by undercover officers in person, as opposed to electronic surveillance that involves devices, only requires departmental approval, not by the panel of judges.

A proposed national security law also seen as a threat to freedoms was shelved after half a million people protested in 2003. AP

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

After 27 years, Khmer Rouge inquiry begins

CAMBODIAN says walking via grave of Khmer Rouge supremo Pol Pot in Anlong Veng, northwest of Phnom Penh, July 24. AFP

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA—More than 27 years after the mass killings and after nearly a decade of investigation, Cambodia and the United Nations finally opened proceedings here Sunday against surviving leaders of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime.

On July 18, a special prosecutor's office opened its investigation into one of the last century's most repressive regimes, in which 1.7 million people died from 1975 to 1979 through torture, systematic killings, starvation, overwork and disease.

A first shipment of 383,149 pages of evidence, contained on 926 sets of microfilm, was delivered to the prosecutors on July 17.

But even if a hoped-for timetable holds, it will be a year and a half before the first defendant is brought before a mixed Cambodian and foreign tribunal. Because of limits on time, space and money, few are likely to face trial on charges of complicity in the deaths of as many as one-fourth of the country's citizens.

The tribunal proceedings have uncertainties and hurdles of both procedure and politics that could slow or stymie them. The United Nations has given the tribunal a budget of $56.3 million for a three-year process that began with the investigations. But it may last longer. There is also a race against mortality, as aging conspirators die off and those who survive grow sicker and more frail. The Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot, died in 1998 at 73. The military commander Ta Mok died July 22. He was believed to be 80.

"If the tribunal were premature by any remaining, there are a lot more 70s, and expect having medical problems. Only one, Kaing Khek Iev, also known as Duch, the commander of the notorious Chamber Tuol Sleng, is in custody.

The tribunal was established by an agreement between Cambodia and the United Nations in 2003 to bring some sort of a Cambodian reckoning to the 1975-79 era.

It has been controversial from the beginning, with Cambodia insisting that its shaky legal system have the basis for the complete tribunal.

"The process is sure to be flawed," said Diane Orentlicher, a professor of international law at the Washington College of Law at American University. "That's not really in question. But those trials are, to point out the obvious, the last chance that surviving victims have to prove." New York Times

Zawahiri says Egypt militants have joined al-Qaida

CAIRO, EGYPT—AL QAEDA NO. 2 leader interested in a new videotape aired Saturday that an Egyptian militant group has joined the terror network.

It was the first time that al-Qaida has announced a branch in Egypt, the Arab world's largest nation. The Egyptian group, Gamaa Islamiya, is apparently a revived version of a militant group of the same name that waged a campaign of violence in Egypt during the 1990s but was crushed in a government crackdown.

"My announce to the Islamic nation, the good news of the unification of a great faction of the knights of the Gamaa Islamiya ... with the al-Qaida group," Ayman al-Zawahiri, the deputy leader of al-Qaida, said in the videotape aired on the Al-Jazeera satellite network.

Al-Zawahiri said the Egyptian group was led by Mohammed al-Ishmawi, the younger brother of Khaled al-Ishmawi, the militant who assassinated Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat in 1979 and was later executed.

The video also included a statement by Mohammed al-Maliqiyya, identified as another top leader of the revived Gamaa. The statement showed al-Maliqiyya walking in a grave of palm trees in a landscape resembling southern Egypt, the Gamaa's former homeland.

Abu Hamza al-Masri, held in Egypt in the mid-1990s and was believed to have been in Afghanistan working with al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, and Dhia Nasreen, an Egyptian serving as militant groups.

It was not clear how much of a following the new version of Gamaa Islamiya has on the ground in Egypt. In previous incarnations it was largely eliminated by the government crackdowns, and its leaders later announced a truce from prison. It has not claimed any attacks since the late 1990s.

Radwan said al-Zawahiri's claims are likely just propaganda.

"This is another talk by Ayman al-Zawahiri. The Gamaa Islamiya has its own leadership and they said they have already rejected joining al-Qaida in the past," he said. "Gamaa Islamiya has announced outside Egypt. They have cancelled in Egypt." AP

Egypt has seen a string of terror bombings against tourist resorts in the Sinai Peninsula since October 2004, killing 94 people. Egyptian authorities have said those attacks were carried out by a group calling itself Monotheism and Jihad, with links to Palestinian militants.

Many experts believe Palestinian anger and Israel's siege imposed by al-Qaida and may have some operational ties, but the Egyptian government has not announced any connection.

The example of the video played by Al-Zawahiri did not mention any government threats or attacks in Egypt.

Al-Zawahiri is Egyptian and was once a member of Islamic Jihad. The other named Egyptian militant group that led violence in the 1990s alongside the original Gamaa Islamiya. AP

AL-ZAWAHIRI

Hiroshima marks A-bomb anniversary

HIROSHIMA, JAPAN—THE Japanese city of Hiroshima marked the 61st anniversary of the world's first atomic attack on Sunday with renewed calls for a nuclear-free world.

Some 45,000 people recited silent prayers at 8:15 a.m. (2315 GMT Saturday), the exact moment in 1945 when a single US bomb instantly killed more than 140,000 people and fatally injured tens of thousands of others with radiation in horrific fashion.

Government officials and ruling party members from 10 countries laid wreaths before a memorial to the dead against the backdrop of the famous A-bomb dome, a bizarre exhibition had burned to a cinder by the bomb's blast.

The site of ground zero is at the memorial park, where survivors mostly in their 70s or 80s also gathered, escorted by their children or grandchildren under a sweltering sun to say prayers for the dead.

"Sixty-one years later, the number of nations enamored of evil and enslaved by nuclear weapons is increasing," Hiroshima Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba said in regards.

Akiba said his city and atomic bomb survivors have long sought the abolition of nuclear weapons. "Yet the world's political leaders continue to ignore these voices," he said.

"I call on the Japanese government to ... forcefully insist that the nuclear-weapon states negotiate in good faith for nuclear disarmament," Akiba said.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said: "We promise to continue leading the international community in the pursuit of abolishing nuclear weapons and achieving permanent peace." The Hiroshima bombing was followed by the dropping of a second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki on Aug. 9, leaving another 70,000 more dead. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, ending World War II.

The anniversary of the attacks comes amid growing tension in the region with North Korea pursuing a missile threat and sticking to its nuclear ambitions. AFP

DRIVES fly over the cenotaph of A-bomb victims during the 61st anniversary celebrations of the world's first nuclear attack, at the Peace Memorial Park, in Hiroshima, Aug. 6. The US bombing in 1945 killed about 140,000 people, almost half the city, either immediately or in the months that followed from radiation sickness or horrific burns. AFP

Sri Lanka rebels say forces will pull back

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA—AFTER days of heavy fighting, the Tamil Tiger rebels said on Saturday that they had ended their offensive against the Sinhalese security forces in the east and were retreating to their original positions.

"Our objective of the mission, with a defensive character, was accomplished and our forces returned to their positions" in keeping with the 2002 cease-fire, Ilanthi Illanthiraiyan, a Tiger military spokesperson, was quoted as saying on the pro-rebel TamilNet Web site. "The operation aimed at giving a military pressure was speedily carried out and caused the same way, as our national leader was highly concerned about the humanitarian situation," he said.

The government said that it had not been officially informed of an end to the hostilities, which have left scores dead, including civilians, but said that if the rebels make it of the town of Batticaloa, the scene of intense fighting this week.

However, there was no confirmation of the dispute over a nearby irrigation canal, which triggered the recent clashes, the worst violence since the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam signed the 2002 cease-fire aimed to ending two decades of strife.

The military said that it had lost 27 personnel in the latest fighting, while the Tigers reported to have lost 52.

More than 30 civilians were killed in the cross-fire, some while sheltering in schools and others on the street while fleeing attacks.

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission said it was trying to investigate reports that 4,000 civilians had been displaced by the Tigers as they went to escape the fighting.

"We have heard about a pile of civilian bodies in the outskirts of Mutur," said Hubert Nilmot, who accompanied the statistics cited to the area on Saturday. AP

New York Times

'Dead zone' reappears off the Oregon coast

FOR THE FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW, around a half gallons off the coast of Oregon have produced a huge "dead zone," an area so low in oxygen that fish and crabs suffocate.

This dead zone is unlike those in the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere, which result from fertilizer runoff or runoff from hog or poultry operations carried by rivers. The Oregon zone appears when the wind generates upwelling currents carrying nutrient-rich but oxygen-poor water from the deep sea to the nutrient zone above, a process called upwelling.

The nutrients encourage the growth of phytoplankton, which usually dies and falls to the ocean floor. Bacteria there consume the plankton, using up oxygen.

Jane Lubchenco, a marine biologist at Oregon State University, said the phenomenon did not appear to be related to increasing El Niño activity. While scientists are looking for more pieces of ocean movements. They made Lubchenco wonder if climate change might be a factor, she said, adding, "There is no other cause on the scene that determines."

The dead zone, which appears in late spring and lasts a month or months, has quadrupled in size since it first appeared in 2002 and this year covers about 1,200 square miles, an area about as large as Rhode Island, Lubchenco said.

"The more dissipates when winds shift, it is not clear what effect the dead zone may have on future fish or crab catches, Lubchenco said. So far, the crab season has been extended until the Thanksgiving celebration next month.

Hal Weeks, a marine ecologist who leads the Marine Habitat Project, said the formation of the low-oxygen, or hypoxic, zones "is a natural process, but the duration and the expansion" of fishing that we would decline in catches and we have become with it's environmental thinking.

$1,000 when the dead zone first appeared, Lubchenco said, she and other researchers discussed it as an interesting anomaly. But now, five years in a row, we are beginning to think there has been some sort of fundamental change in ocean conditions off the West Coast," she said, possibly because of changes in the jet stream caused by global warming. New York Times

With eye on political reality, Bush takes a shorter vacation

CRAWFORD, TEXAS—THIS perched Texas cattle town, population 705, has been a haven for Presidents and their designer, since well before the hallowed shorter confines of Washington. Hint, Bush can draw breath, ride his mountain bike along scrubby trails, curl up with a book or kick up his feet for another seven weeks.

But this year reality—in the form of the November midterm elections, the press secretary Cindy Sheehan and the legacy of Hurricane Katrina—has intruded on the president's summer vacation, cutting short his time at his 1,600-acre ranch.

"It basically reflects how crises and a busy calendar," said Dan Bartlett, counselor to Bush, explaining the slower-paced visit.

It also reflects a political decision made by Bush's advisers, and the president himself, to present a re-port of the public relations debacle of last August. That month began with highly publicized protests by Sheehan, whose son was killed in Iraq and ended with the image of the president on vacation while New Orleans drowned, an image that helped start his slide in popularity.

So when summer planning time rolled around this year, the White House was determined to do something different.

"It was a political calculation that we wanted to remain in Washington as needed to do, and I think he knew it," said one Republican who has discussed the matter with Bush, who would choose to spend White House decisions only if not spoiled by nature. He added, "I don't think he is resentful or unprepared to be in Washington."

Scott Reed, a Republican strategist, said the new calendar was a shrewd politics.

"This is a direct reflection of the debacle that summer, when a president seems to be unable to be isolated down in Crawford," Reed said, adding, "I've always thought a month was a long time. Most people don't take a whole month off in the summer." New York Times

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Casino

Mexico court rejects full recount

MEXICO CITY—A SEVEN-MEMber electoral tribunal on Saturday unanimously rejected a demand from the leftist candidate for president for a complete recount of votes in last month's election, setting the stage for more protests by thousands of people who have camped out in the capital's Zocalo to say that the election was fraudulent.

Later on the day, the candidate, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, a former Mexico City mayor who champions the cause of the poor, refused to accept the ruling. At a massive rally in the Zocalo, the city's historic central square, he called on his followers to continue a campaign of civil disobedience in support of a full recount. He gave no hint of what the next move in that campaign would be.

"We demand that the magistrates rectify their decision because they have the ability and the moral responsibility to do it," he said, as several of several thousand chanted "fraud, fraud."

During a two-hour morning session, the judges ordered that the votes in the July 2 election be recounted in only 11,839 of the 130,000 polling places. They rejected Lopez Obrador's argument that there was enough fraud to void the election, even though evidence of fraud in tracking or counting all 41 million votes.

They also noted that leaders of the Democratic Revolution had failed to challenge the results in 78 electoral districts, and that under the law, those results were sound.

Last month, an official tally handed a narrow victory to Felipe Calderon, the conservative candidate from President Vicente Fox's governing National Action Party. The count showed Calderon won by 243,000 votes. Lopez Obrador has argued there were irregularities in at least 72,000 polling places and evidence of fraud in about 800.

Over the last month, Lopez Obrador has said repeatedly he would not accept anything less than a full recount of the 41 million votes cast.

A spokesman for Lopez Obrador, Cesar Nunez, said the candidate was closeted with his closest advisers, hammering out a plan of action. His supporters have already blockaded the main artery of the capital, Avenida Reforma, for miles, tying up traffic and hurting businesses. In his speech, Lopez Obrador said he would unveil the next stage of the protest on Sunday morning.

Calderon, 43, a former energy minister, remained silent on Saturday. Lawyers for his party said the ruling seemed fair and that they hoped it would close up doubts about the outcome. Alan Feld, Dianne Nunez Barrios

OBRADOR vows to continue street protests after ruling. AFP

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Castro to be back in weeks, Cuba VP says

CASTRO in September 2005 photo. AP

HAVANA—AILING CUBAN LEADer Fidel Castro, described by sources as well enough to be eating and talking, may resume power in several weeks, Cuba's vice president said on Saturday.

Vice President Carlos Lage declared a newspaper report that the 79-year-old Castro, guerrilla fighter who had surgery for stomach bleeding and temporarily turned over power to brother Raul, on Monday is suffering from stomach cancer and has an untreatable prognosis.

"Fidel has had to confront an operation and is recovering favorably. He does not have cancer," Lage told reporters during an official visit to Bolivia.

He said the longtime communist leader, who has not been seen in public since July 26, could resume power from Raul "in several weeks." Lage's comments were the latest assurances by Cuban officials and allies that Castro had not lost his grip on the communist government he has run since overtaking late power in a 1959 revolution.

In Havana, where residents were stunned on Monday's announcement that the "Commander" had provisionally given power to Raul Castro, 75, sources who had spoken to government officials said Fidel Castro was doing well for a man his age.

"I was told Fidel is talking/joking, he has eaten something and sat up," one source told Reuters, asking not to be identified.

Mid-level Communist Party officials were informed that Castro was out of intensive care and beginning recovery, a party source said in Santiago. Cuba's second largest city.

Bolivian President Evo Morales, in a speech to barrackers in Sucre, Bolivia, with Lage in attendance, said Castro already "has recovered" from the operation.

"What is now lacking is that he return to running the country," said Morales, a Castro ally.

The announcement followed a report by one of Brazil's top newspapers, Folha de S. Paulo, that Cuban officials told Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and members of the ruling Workers' Party that Castro had a malignant stomach tumor and his condition was worse than has been publicly admitted. Reuters

This may look like half a page. But it's actually half the pie.

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INQUIRER

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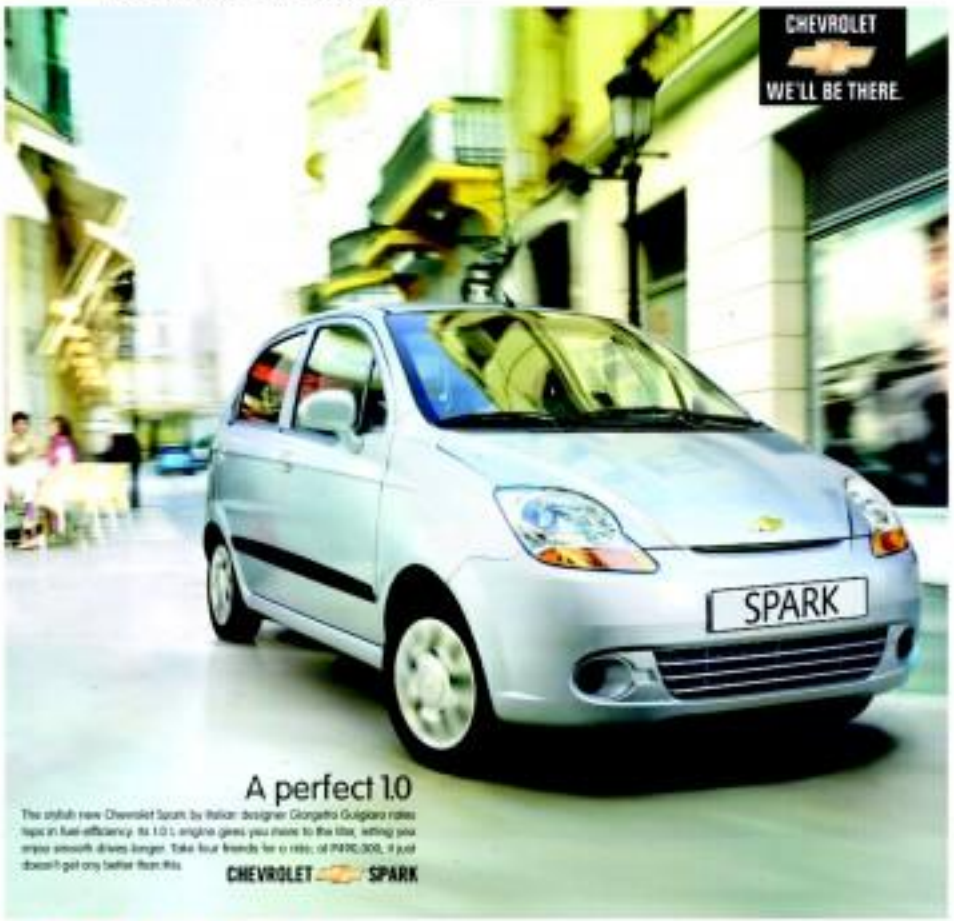

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ATENEO'S TOP SCORING JC Intal completes a breakaway dunk against University of Santo Tomas.

Eagles slam Tigers with blowout win

By Jasmine Vi. Puyo

THE ATENEO BLUE EAGLES still could do nothing wrong.

Shooting their lure with an early scoring onslaught, the Eagles pulled off the season's sweet lopsided win—a 114-78 rout of the hapless former Tigers—to sweep the first round of the UAAP men's basketball tournament yesterday at the Araneta Coliseum.

Led by veterans JC Intal, the Eagles zoomed to a comfortable 63-36 halftime cushion from a 38-10 deadlock. Ateneo's 35 points in the second period was also the highest point production in a single quarter this season.

Intal shot 24 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to lead a solid scoring attack by the Eagles' starting five, who all finished in double figures.

The six-game sweep curse is big after the Blue Eagles sweep the first round in junior play. A three-division season title sweep boosted as the Lady Eagles also did a league-leading 7-1 mark.

"We picked up the confidence from our win against UE," said coach Norman Black. "We could turn this game around somehow that we will be in a track meet, knowing that UST is a running team. We just pushed the ball really hard, especially JC."

Back in their sophomore form, the University of the East Warriors secured second spot after cruising to a 98-84 triumph over the University of the Philippines Maroons.

The Warriors got huge games from their stars led by Rookie Gamboa, who pumped in a game-high 20 points on top of eight rebounds and seven assists.

Apart from improving their record to 4-2, coach Dindo Pumaren said the victory showed his Warriors have started to recover from their early struggles.

"In the last two years, we've been successful in playing pressure defense," said Pumaren. "Our problem (in our two losses) was are compared in shooting (percentage)."

The Warriors dumped down on Migo de Asis, the Maroons' rookie three-point specialist who finished with a personal season-low of six points.

The Maroons struggled from the field in the fourth period and joined the National Bulldogs, four favorite favourites and the Tigercat 2-4.

The scores:

First Game (Men)

AU 98—Custodio 20, Ibañez 7, Arellano 18, Gregorio 14, Lalicano 12, Martinez 10, Lagos 3, Labagala 2, Espiritu 2, Yeo 2, Mendoza 1, Mendiola 0.

UP 84—Cruz 17, Dario 12, Ipac 11, Co 10, Angeles 7, Escalona 6, Bartolo 6, Bautista 5, Rigonan 3, Barrogan 3, Gonzales 3, Li 2, Yu 0, Dyquiangco 0.

Quarters: 24-20, 51-42, 76-72, 98-84

Second Game (Men)

ATENEO 114—Intal 24, Yu 16, Ibanez 12, Lontoc 11, Alejandro 12, Nieto 8, Sison 6, Zamora 5, Rosales 2, Bolick 2, Mendoza 2, Lanete, Ramirez 0

UST 78—Espiritu 19, Mesa 14, Cortez 10, Cruz 9, Cabahug 8, Espiritu 5, Ayaba 3, Cunha 2, Gile 2, Sison 0

Quarters: 38-10, 63-36, 93-69, 114-78

MIÑOZA

Miñoza ends up tied for 11th place

FRANCIS MIÑOZA JOURNEYED HIS role but with a triple-bogey ruined homers on the eighth hole but the Filipinos are still proved his best finish of 11th place in seventy-day in the Juzo Chiken Classic won by Hideto Tanihara in Hokkaido, Japan.

Just four shots off the lead after three rounds, Miñoza put himself out of the championship picture on when he hit the tree at 40, although he fought back with a 34 on the back nine for a two-over par 74, his worst score in four days.

Miñoza, 46, figured in a five-way tie for 11th at 288, worth par in Hokkaido's Otaru Country Club. Japanese Ryo Ishikawa fired a winning score of Tanihara, who shot just a 72 but still won by one.

Miñoza, winner of six titles in the heavy Japanese Tour, won 2,958 million yen (about P1,295 million) and moved to 64th in the money list with earnings of 11,798,106 yen (c. 11 events).

Latvia storms past fatigued SMC-RP

DOHA, QATAR—THE DEFICIT-laden coming into play elimination-round topnotcher Latvia scored 10 easy 104-78 win over SMC-Philippines Saturday in the semifinals of the Asiabasket International Basketball Championship at the Al-Gharafa Sports Club Hall here.

The Latvians thus earned a ticket to the championship match Sunday opposite fifth-seed champion Qatar, which downed Qatar in the other semifinal, 75-62.

The Filipinos actually battled Latvia on equal footing in the early minutes and trailed by only three after the first 10 minutes of play, 25-28. But coach Chot Reyes' wards, who were playing their fourth game in four nights, bowed soon after, and the Latvians cruised on easy coast their fourth win today to 4-0-0 in Group A.

SMC-Philippines player Qatar on Sunday for third place in their elimination round faceoff, the hosts won 77-58 after Bayes was ejected on two technicalities.

Line-ups:

LATVIA 104—Siskovs 22, Ilgas 6, Bulmers 13, Veinbergs 13, Tisa 17, Lasis 10, Jansons 9, Gulbis 4, Jansons 0, Stuhna 6, Silins 4, Jansons 7.

SMC-RP 78—Allen 12, Dao 11, Ferrer 13, Reyes 6, Hontiveros 6, Mendoza, Pinto 6, Barroca 6, Santos 4, Gandela 3, Yee 2, Bayes 0.

Quarters: 28-25, 53-41, 81-62, 104-78

SAM MIGUEL-RP's Marby Ripperdan Smith (r.) driving Karel Jansons (left) of Latvia during their lopsided game.

Fil-Japanese bags bronze in Vietnam

HO CHI MINH—TOMOHIRO Hoshina gave the Philippines a decent start to the 19th Vietnam International Judo Tournament on Saturday, winning the bronze medal after dominating Chanwar Saipeh's Chaw Pin, pin at the army indoor stadium here.

The 19-year-old 3K Japanese could not sustain an impressive start and lose to Japanese Koji Inoue in the second match before challenge up that victory for the Philippines' only medal on Day 1 of this Class B tournament.

The RP team missed the chance to bag two more bronzes, after Oliver Francisco and 22nd SEA Games silver medalist Nancy Quiñon fell to opposite foes.

The secret behind archery's 'secret success'

BARE EYE

Butch Trinidad

THIS IS A CONTINUATION OF THE amazing success story of a national archery ethic, after being snubbed from the Philippine team, went to Malaysia on her own and eventually emerged the top performer for the national team.

On the record, national archery officials claimed they did nothing officially wrong.

"Ms Amaya Pin was not included in the list of participants whose expenses were shouldered by the PSC due to her inability to meet some of the criteria ... like participation in the 2006 Philippine Olympic Festival National Target Archery Championship held in Cebu City last October, June 12-16, 2006," explained Dr. Lennox N. S. Browne, president of the National Archery Association of the Philippines.

Asked, explained Browne in a letter to the bounce, they were "definitely very happy about the victory of the young lady archer who garnered three gold medals, three silver medals at the recently concluded 2nd Asian Grand Prix at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

* * *

For the record, the father of the young archer, Ashley "Al" Pin, did not complain with this reporter. The identity details on the amazing adventure of twenty-year-old Amaya Pin, a university scholar at UE were gathered through a conversation with a Batangueña friend who wondered why there had been nothing about the big victory of the archer in the papers.

For the record, 29 Pins came to see for us the day the columns appeared in the Philippine Star and like family, never before grudged the NAAP for having excluded Amaya from the list of participants in the SEA Games Elite.

The archer's father said they were not seeking any reimbursements (of the expenses), adding their have also spent for other foreign shots of Amaya, which obviously helped hone her into a world-class archer.

* * *

Amaya, explained her father, has requested that her name not be dragged in in the developing "secret success" story but rather credit the perseverance of many sports-fans.

For the record, the PSC acted immediately and offered to reimburse Amaya's expenses for her Malaysian stint upon reaching the details of her triumph in that said tokens.

Amaya had to be excluded from team members financed by the PSC after she suffered a freak accident (she slipped on a bank at home) last April 20 that resulted in her right hand being put in a cast.

For the record, she wrote a letter to the PSC on July 5, often the Medal's president, to be reinstated in the list of athletes to be sent by the PSC to Malaysia."

In that letter, Amaya explained she had been cleared by her doctor (Rodrigo Ayala Ong) for immediate competition.

"It's been more than a month since I started regular training. I even performed my regular training today. I believe that I am now in my competition form and I am very confident that, if given the chance, I will be able to represent our country well in Malaysia," Amaya explained in her letter.

* * *

For the record, the NAAP without having to claim it knows its athletes best, did nothing officially wrong. Amaya, to repeat, failed to meet some of the criteria.

For the unsung, there's also nothing wrong if people have started to wonder why an athlete, who had no place in the national delegations, was quickly included in the SF team delegation once the need arose.

For the record, there was an evident effort to keep Amaya's career success a secret.

Explained the NAAP head: "Mr Clyde Shoinine of the Bulletin Today was sent (out) by the PSC to cover the Asian Archery Grand Prix and all results were published in the bulletin, Tempo and some tabloid newspapers."

* * *

Fine. But there's also started asking if Shoinine was "definitely very happy" about Amaya's success.

Here's why: In explaining their failure to fully publicize the the triumph, Browne also said that, "By asking their countrymen directly to 'yes, the father of Ms. She had pre-empted, at least partly, our intentions to have some media publicity on her three gold medals."

For the record, Amaya Pin completed her victories in Malaysia at the end of the Tuesday, July 25. That explains on her "secret success" since out tag. 2.

For the record, there were a good few days from the time Amaya's the had completed her victories in Malaysia to the time the tribal rulers appeared.

Nothing wrong with the belated acknowledgement, although this needn't always show that the NAAP has missed the bells-out, again.

Here's hoping Amaya Pin gets a timely award for patriotic performance.

Knights take on Altas hoping to catch idle Lions

DEFENDING CHAMpion Letran tries to keep up with idle leader San Beda crosses as Philippine Christian University seeks to fortify its hold of third place in the NCAA men's basketball cage tournament at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

The Knights (7-1) will join for a share of top spot with the Lions (8-1) when they tackle the Perpetual Help Altas in the 2 p.m. match.

The Dolphins (6-2) tangle with the St. Benilde Blazers (3-7) in the 4 p.m. contest hoping to stay in strong contention for the top two slots in the Final Four.

At this stage, Mapua (5-4) is the only other team with a solid chance of making it to the Final Four where the two teams with the best records are rewarded with twice-to-beat incentives in the fight for the two title berths.

The Knights and the Dolphins are favored although Letran will have to show consistency there after struggling past the Blazers, 77-63, last week.

"The way Perpetual will play tough, so we have to have a good shot. Another key for us is our defense. We're not consistent defending against St. Benilde, which we can't afford against Perpetual," said Letran coach Louie Alas.

Though Letran owns a 66-46 rout of Perpetual in the first round, Alas admits he is worried over his team's success after the Lions evaded the Knights' sweeping designs with a 77-45 victory.

Interestingly Alas is expected to lend the Knights while the Altas will count on Fritz Siezmo and Chad Silva.

PCU staff hands on Gabby Espino and Jason Castro as it attempts to duplicate its 66-61 victory over St. Benilde in the first round.

Mary Anthony Hayon

STANDINGS

	W	L
San Beda	8	1
LSGH	7	1
PCU	6	2
Mapua	5	4
SSC	3	6
Perpetual	3	6
Jose Rizal	2	6
St. Benilde	1	7

GAMES TODAY

(Ninoy Aquino Stadium)

12 noon – Letran vs. Perpetual Help

2pm – PCU vs. St. Benilde (men)

4 p.m. – Mapua vs. San Sebastian (men)

Breaks of game give Luat Kaohsiung title

CONQUERING ATTESIS AMA is FORMIDAble for, Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat yesterday raised the Kaohsiung leg of the Asia Miguel Asian 9-ball tour after an 11-7 victory over young local bet Hsin Hsi-kai at the Kaohsiung Business Exhibition Hall in Taiwan.

Luat, who came into the finals as the underdog, jumped to an early 5-1 lead over the former two-time junior world champ and never looked back, pocketing the $50,000 (around 1P2,000) champion's prize while keeping a Philippine sweep of this series alive.

It was a victory that soothed the feelings of a supportive Filipino crowd after top Philippine hopes Efren "Bata" Reyes failed to survive the elimination rites and Francisco "Django" Bustamante lost in the semifinals.

And it came from a veteran called upon as an 11th hour substitute to play in this premier Asian tournament for the first time in his career.

SEIZING THE MOMENT. Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat in Kaohsiung.

Crucial mistakes

"I almost lost (despite going 5-1 up)," said Luat, who as a skinny, 14-year-old gawkshow at Alexis Bautista billiards circuit used to crack-out wins on the break.

"I also got lucky because he (Hsi) made some crucial mistakes," added Luat, who got to the title match by topping Indonesia's Muhammad Zulfadli, 11-8, in the semifinals.

Hsieh, winner of the Vietnam leg, was lanced following a 6-5 loss to Japan's Masashi Tsuzaki Friday night, while Bustamante was shown the door by Ruiz, 4-11, in their Final Four confrontation.

Hsi, who settled for the $5,000 second placer's purse, took out Tanaka in the semifinals.

Alcmid Gallego, who also lost in the qualifying leg here, earlier topped the Bangkok leg, and this Filipino pair for a sixth sweep when the final leg is played in Jakarta next month.

Automatic victory

"The victory is the only ranking tour in Asia for players hoping to qualify for the World Pool Championship. The top 10 finishers after four legs will automatically enjoy the $100,000 tournament scheduled in Manila in November.

Filipinos won three of the four legs last year with Gerdy Villa prevailing in Singapore, Reynel Jakarta and Jurisen Ed Billiards Center of the Year Bonnie Alcano ruling the Manila leg.

Luat got to within 6-4 after pocketing on a crucial scratch by Lust in the 14th rack. But the Taiwanese blew several chances to come even closer and apply more pressure by missing what looked like easy shots in the succeeding games.

"It was Luat's leg to win," said Philippine billiards "godfather" Antrim "Paulo" Pascal. "He showed the determination to win even after committing some mistakes." Marlon Bermudez, Contributor

Asrat's Sia elected Ucas president

MARIE SIA OF THE ADAMSON COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (ASTC) recently elected president of the Universities and Colleges Athletic Association (Ucas). Sia became the eighth Queen of Ucas College. She has officially begun on Aug. 12, when the league's fifth season started at the San Andres Gym. Here is a vice president as Asrat's "I believe in the talents of the Ucas boosters, so I will continue what they started. We will make this league big go," said Sia, whose Asrat team is only in its second year in the league.

Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

AGE GROUP winner Bryan Paul Pablo, 8, gets his trophy from Mega City Mayor Jose Mabe'mlo.

Nulial proves worth in 21K, tops Naga leg

NAGA CITY... ANTONIO NULIAL JR. proved more than equal to the challenges of a longer race while Luisa Baleta re-enthroned her old title yesterday in the Naga City leg of the 30th National Mile Marathon at the Plaza Quezon here.

After placing second in the 5K race here last year, Nulial emphatically surmised the 21K race for the first time, clocking one hour, 16 minutes and 39 seconds.

"Hindi muna ako sumali sa 21K last okada ko nakakalaro ang kalaban (I did not try the 21K in my first race here last year because I thought my rivals were strong)," said the 22-year old Nulial. "Ngayong nasubukan ko na, kapalan ang loob pala (I tried it this time and it was easy after all)."

A third-year Criminology student at the University of North Eastern Philippines, Nulial advanced to the GSE national finals on Dec. 16 in Metro Manila after settling with second place in Bicol (1:16:01) and third place Ilocos Junior (1:17:30).

Baleta clocked 1:38:46 to reclaim the women's title she yielded to Joanne Montagut last year.

Baleta, the twin sister of 2003 Hilo Marathon queen Lira Bombao, said she was bowled during the race last year and did not have the strength to beat Montagut, who was second this time in 1:40:48.

Lourdes Bombao placed third 2:00:43 for third in the race held in partnership with Bayview Park Hotel Manila, Ali-dao, Cebu Pacific, Department of Tourism and Powerhost.

Nulial said he had been training for this event since June but had to fight a bout with the flu last Monday.

"Now I need to prepare for the 42K marathon," said Nulial, who will try to beat defending national champion Constantino Sabal, the new owner of the Hilo Marathon 42K record of 2:23.33.

Late year's leg winner Siri Ramolete finished fifth, five minutes behind Nulial, and said he lacked practice this time.

The top three finishers in the 5K run were Jose Gallao (17:27), Hernan Dacuba (17:34) and Roger Pereras (17:41) in the men's division and Sabinas May Evangelista (19:08), Sharon Bachelor (20:04) and Rowena Mascuada (20:14) in the women's side.

The winners in the 3K Kiddies race were Brian Paul Pablo and Rosalyn Pagong in the 6-9 age category and Miguel Gonzales and Cindy Lopez in the 10-12 group.

Organizers also gave a special award to 78-year-old Alejandro Deza, who won the oldest 21K finisher in yesterday's race.

Naga City Mayor Jesse Robredo assisted Hilo Sports Events executive Bo Gutang in handing the trophies and medals to the winners.

The 30-leg circumnation schedule resumes next week at the UMAK in Olongapo City.

PBA readies plan to stop 'foul' trades

Eala: Teams shall list top 5 cagers

By Jane Navarro

THE FEDDER CREATED BY THE RECENT HORT-PLAYER, THREE-WAY TRADE trade involving Ramanjer Slaughter, Coca-Cola and Ateli may be prevented in the future through a "restricted meeting list."

Commissioner Noli Eala said establishing a restricted meeting list, or RTL, will see only players in a similar manner to the future but also maintain a competitive balance among the teams.

Under the restricted list, Eala said all teams would be required to name their top five players who could only be traded with their respective bosses in the other teams.

"The top five players should be equal in terms of skills, longevity, marketability and salary," said Eala, who will table the measure in the next PBA board meeting to be held in Metro on Aug. 13-14.

Eala said that it's high time the RTL was considered following the detainment caused by the multi-player deal that transpired last week.

He said he had already discussed the RTL with new board chair Ricky Vargas, who, traditionally, wants to amend the league's constitution and by-laws.

Eala said the popularity of the recent transaction sprang when Ateli recovered its 2005 and 2006 first-round picks from Coca-Cola after finding Manny Ramos and Rabeh Al-Hussaini to the Tigers.

Based on the findings of the Commissioner's Office, the Tigers committed no violation by shipping Ryan Bernardo along with their two first-round picks to the Tigers.

The Tigers exchanged Billy Mamaril, Bal Bonsol and the rights to Rudy Rudwell, whom the Tigers immediately sent to the Barangay Ginebra Kings, who swapped Arlo Demusalan, Dwight Sotto, Pamana and Rainier Navarro.

Eala said the Super Coach when the Express traded Pamana and Ramos to the Tigers and returned their two future first-round picks.

"Ateli should have kept the best players while Coca-Cola kept the two first-round picks," Eala told the Inquirer.

According to league rules, a team which transferred its players or draft rights "may not reacquire such rights prior to the end of the season in which the transfer occurred, or if the transfer occurred between seasons, prior to the end of the next succeeding season."

FILIPINO challenger Rocco Flores (left) in action blows with world champion Omar Narvaez of Argentina during their fight Sunday.

Flores blows WBO flyweight title bid

OMAR ANDRES NARVAEZ OF ARGENTINA outclassed Filipino challenger Rocco Flores and easily retained his World Boxing Organization Flyweight championship yesterday at the Super Domo Delos in Cordoba, Argentina.

Two judges handed out similar 119-109 scorecards while the third came up with an even more lopsided 120-108 score for the undefeated local boy Narvaez, who notched his 32nd win, 15 by knockout. He is one of the fighters ranked in the top.

Flores, the mandatory challenger, came in with less than several day to 30-3-1.

Flores, the reigning WBO Asia Pacific flyweight titlist, came into the fight riding on 11 bout winning streak against Filipino fighters. He has also successfully defended his title, which he had won against a Thai in 2004, in so many occasions.

He defended inter the original crown he won in 2004 against a Thai to earn the chance to challenge Narvaez in Argentina's second largest city.

Flores' loss followed a string of defeats suffered by Filipinos in world title fights this year. The other losers were Brandon Galit (IBF flyweight), Sonny Boy Jaro (WBC minimumweight) and Randy Suico (WBO light-weight).

Late last year, another Filipino fighter—Roberto "Bobby" Gonzales—also failed to snatch the WBA minimumweight crown from Japan's Yutaka Hida. Aubrey L. Lapuebica, Contributor

Backups give fancied chess squads a lift

Standings after fifth round (rated-game) results:

1) – Mandaue City, Pagadian City, 4½-½; 3) – Cebu City, 4½-½; 4) – Bacolod City, 4-1; 5) – Tagbilaran City, 3½-1½; 6) – Iligan City, 3-2; 7) – Cebu City "A", 2½-2½; 8) – Cebu City "B", 2-3; 9) – Dumaguete City, 1½-3½; 10) – Tagbilaran City "A", 1-4; 11) – Cebu City "C", 0-5; 12) – Lapu-Lapu City, 0-5.

MAJOR GENERAL AND RYAN FRANCIS BEAT reigning Philippine Air Force boss in Boards 2 and 3 yesterday as the Navotians squad remained on top of 2006 Rapid Open chess team championships at the Star Mall in Mandaluyong.

DARLED: Fine draw

Gumanoy and Francisco posted victories over Raymond Salvador and Rudy Atilio, to tie Mandaluyong pair, 3.5-3.5 (win) over Ong de Perez, whose skippers Ronald Jimbit, Saint Umandimate before Mariano was drawn.

Meanwhile Bishop City got the lift from unbeaten Michael Villaruz and Elvin Arguelles in a similar 2.5-1.5 decision of Jimbit for a share of second place.

Grandmaster Mark Paragua was also held to a draw by NM Darmin Lasio and Villaruz and Arguelles pounded the offensive after dismissing out victories over Samson Lim and Reforsol Leyvalucio the middle two boards.

Mayor Melecio Bautista Jr.'s Bulacan City now has 4.5 points, the same output of Pagadian and the Superstore of Agusan del Sur, 3.5-1.5 while last year All Ur Ate Inc. and Cebu City were tipped City 4, respectively.

The two-day, nine-round Swiss tournament, which is being organized by the Mandaluyong City Chess Association, offers a prize pool of P300,000. The champion team pocket P50,000.

A total of 54 teams are seeking action with May managers now tied the fifth spot with Jimbit and three others with 3.5 points after bowing to the Rural Technological University squad. Marine Commodore, Contributor

Stick to boxing, Pacquiao

BOBBY KERO MANNY PACQUIAO should put on hold his plans to run for vice mayor of Manila next year. He/She has to continue the big business of boxing. He should stick to it and make boy while the sun still shines.

Not to belittle his noble intentions of serving the people, but he can be of help to so many other ways without necessarily becoming the vice mayor of Manila.

The report about him being tossed to be the running mate of Amold "Al" Atienza, son of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, who is now on his last term, has left the boxing and management skills he was only 21 when he became twins lightweight champion in 1998. Now 27 years old. All is chair of the Manila Sports Council and was recently appointed by President Macapagal-Arroyo as Presidential Assistant on Youth and Sports.

MOVING HAS CHANGED. I don't think I want to hear another report that the Philippine basketball team is being again in its campaign abroad. I may sound like a broken record, but I am expecting here what I have been saying in the past, that basketball is not for Filipinos.

For instance, in the ongoing 4th Fiesta International Basketball Championship in Doha, Qatar, SBC Pilipinas were down in defeat three times in a row, losing to host Qatar, 77-58, last Wednesday; to Lamia, 75-65, on Thursday and to African champion Angola, 82-67, Friday. Still, the RP team, made up mostly by well-heeled PBA players and a few pba-bound college stars, has a slim chance of winning the title with both up-back victories in the last two games.

In the recent William Jones Cup in Taiwan, SBC Pilipinas failed to make the round of four after losing four games in five starts during the qualifying matches. What a pity, isn't that the team supposed to be the best in the land, a brand-new team that is supposed to be strong, well-trained and competitive? It seems to me nothing has changed. We are still the favorite whipping boys of our much-improved rivals despite our bold ambitions to regain our past glory in the international basketball scene.

The 1980s all-out campaign to take part in the Doha Asian Games in December and qualify for the 2008 Beijing Olympics is a great idea. But, as I have said again and again, it is not a practical idea, an idea which is enough to impossible to achieve.

I have no quarrel with PBA commissioner Noli Eala and national coach Chot Reyes, but they should wake up to the harsh realities of the times. Philippine participation in the basketball events of the Doha Asiad is even hanging in the air because the Philippines association is suspended by FIBA, the international basketball federation.

On the country's chances with basketball, Carlos Loyzaga, the great one Filipino basketeer of all time, once noted, "Basketball in the Philippines is not popularly rated the silver sports, but this is saying because there are other sport disciplines where the #1 spots athletes are rated." By silver sports description, Mr. Loyzaga probably meant boxing, billiards, bankwood, archery, chess, golf, bowling and billiards where height is not an advantage.

Basketball's contenders popular by named in the 1950s and 1960s when the Philippines consistently won the Asian Games and ABC championships. In 1954, the national team, led by Hall of Famers Loyzaga and Leon Monan, won third place in the World Basketball Championship in the de Janeiro, Brazil. Loyzaga was also named to the WBC Mythical Five that year.

The decline in Philippine basketball, specifically in the Asian Games, started during the 1966 Bangkok Asiad, ending up in the present. The RP players nosbed their last appearance in Olympic basketball in Munich in 1972.

TENNIS CHAMP Jessica Marie Lee Agra (third from left), fresh off her doubles victory in an ITF championship in Egypt, makes a courtesy call in Sports Quezon, Inc. (SPQ) president Red Claudio (right) as Asian Prince Tennis Rackets for its support to NP tennis players. The 14-year-old Agra also reached the singles quarterfinals of her class in the Egypt tournament after earlier making the semifinals in both singles and doubles of an ITF event in Sri Lanka, the doubles finals in Abu Dhabi and the doubles final four in Singapore. Jessica is also the reigning singles champion in the Toby's Age Group tourney. Alex Agra is also Jessica's father. Alberto Agra (left) and SPQ marketing manager Lisa Enriquez.

Nat'l 9-ball tourney, Adidas Streetball top Forum topics

THE MONEY-RICH BIDA BIBAL 9-BALL CHAMPIONship heads the lineup of the sessions in Tuesday's PSA Forum at the major function room of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) on Quezon Congress of the Philippines (NPC) Sec. Nic Mendoza and other officials will talk about the thing. To 10 invited fast-rising the country's finest cue artists. Joining them in the popular sports program aired over Dyaris Radio 93.9 FM are Mandaluyong City Mayor Benjamin Abalos Jr. and Mayor Jose Mabe'mlo as officials behind the Adidas Streetball Challenge national finals headed by Adidas sports marketing manager Randy Custodio and tournament director Jay Taburada.

Tiger takes control in Buick golf

GRAND BLANC, MICHIGAN—TIGER WOODS GOT UP EARLY Saturday to finish his second round, and promptly hit one of his worst shots in years.

By the end of the third round, he was in a decisive position after swinging together fantastic shots from one to green.

Woods closed it out his second straight victory, matching one of the best shots for his third straight 65 under 65 and a two-stroke lead in the Buick Open.

He surged to the top of the leaderboard with a birdie at No. 16 and caught a break on the last hole, helping him pull away from a pack of players hoping their way with Warwick Hills.

Woods' two-shot on 18 were way left and two-thought off a spectator and into the fairway. Woods thanked the fan by giving him a signed glove, and ended up tanking a 7-footer for birdie.

"That guy is going to have a bad beam on his head," Woods said. "He really took one for the team."

Robert Allenby, Jason Gleave and Scott Verplank were tied for second after 60s. Two-time defending champion Vijay Singh (68) was three strokes behind in a group of five that included Vaughn Taylor, who matched the third-round tournament record with a 63.

"It's the type of golf course that you can shoot anything," Allenby said. "Get your ticket! Under the lane right! leader to finish fourth. It shows you that you're never really out of it."

Woods is 20-for-20 when leading tournaments by more than one shot and is 33-of-38 when leading or tied entering a final round.

If the 30-year-old Woods wins his second Buick Open on Sunday, it will be his 50th PGA Tour victory ... making him the youngest to reach the milestone.

He is playing in his first tournament since his emotional win at the British Open and before he goes for his 12th major at the PGA Championship next month.

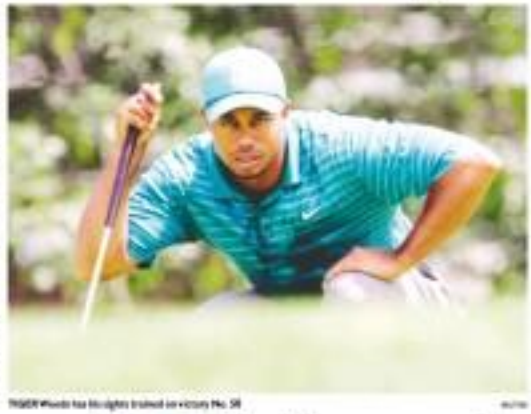
Woods resumed the rain-delayed second round in the morning on the par-5 18th hole and promptly hooked his tee shot out of bounds.

"It was probably the worst shot I've hit in years, just a terrible swing hook," he said.

He bogeyed the hole and finished with a 66. His 12-under 132 total left him one shot behind Bert Quigley, who slipped back in the pack with a 71 to the third round to finish at 14 under.

Woods, who had a 10-shot lead before the third round, bogeyed No. 2 after running the green on his approach. After Quigley got in 11 under on the fourth hole, Woods stayed within a shot with a dutch, 18-footer for his first of three birdies on the front nine.

He had four birdies on the back, lowering just getting under par doesn't cut it at the Buick Open. Pars are like bogeys on a lot of holes at Warwick Hills, which is relatively short and has greens that the players save about.



TIGER Woods has his sights trained on victory No. 50

Hansen breaks 'baby' record

IRVINE, CALIFORNIA—BRENDAN Hansen closed the US Swimming Championships with his second world record of the week Saturday, learning his own mark in the 200m breaststroke.

Hansen clubbed the title in 2:08.75, lowering the previous mark by a second of 2:09.04 set in Long Beach, California, on July 11, 2004.

"The 200 is my baby" said Hansen, who broke his 100m breaststroke world record (1:07.13 seconds on Tuesday.

"It has been my event since I was a little kid. It's my favorite event. I knew that if I was really fast in the 100, that coming out here in the 200 I was going to be pretty quick."

Hansen, who completed a 100m-200m breaststroke double at the world championships last year, was ahead of world record pace the entire race, and finished well ahead of Eric Shoemoto (2:11.28) and Scott Usher (2:11.96).

After a strong swim in the heats, Hansen said, he just tried to stay calm and conserve energy for the final.

"The only way I was really going to stay calm was to sleep. I took a nap and I woke up and was hanging out with my teammate (Ian) Crocker, just talking about how easy the morning was, and I knew the 200 was going to be three if I swam it right," he said.

Olympian Amanda Weir won the women's 100m freestyle with an American record of 53.58 seconds. She finished ahead of Natalie Coughlin (54.28) and Lacey Nymeyer.

HANSEN

Steinhauer grabs British Open lead

GUTHRIE ST ANNES, ENGLAND— Two-time champion Sherri Steinhauer made a 30-foot eagle putt and shot a 6-under 66 Saturday for a three-stroke lead at the Women's British Open.

At 7 under 207, she led Laurena Ochoa, 2000 British Open champion Sophie Gustafson, 2006 winner Karen Stupples and Juli Inkster.

After halfway leader Inkster squandered a three-stroke lead at Royal Lytham, Steinhauer made an eagle and four birdies in a throwback to the performances that earned her British Open titles in 1998 and '99 before the tournament became a major.

Inkster, who bogeyed the last hole after her second shot landed in a greenside bunker, made a 2-over 74.

Her one-night three-shot lead had been cut in two when she started her second, but the 46-year-old American—trying to become the oldest LPGA player to win a major—finished the first to go back to three ahead of the field. Six double bogeys at the seventh and 18th holes wiped out her lead.

Steinhauer, who won the first of her British Open titles at Lytham, went into something of a decline after her second Open cut struck at Woburn, winning just one tournament in 6 1/2 years on the LPGA Tour.

Entering the day five strokes behind Inkster, she made her charge from the 13th by picking up five shots in six holes. She almost holed a 20-foot birdie putt at 17 which would have put her four ahead.

Ochoa carded the best round of the tournament, a 65.

The Minnesota native and finished with birdies and had five pars in between without a single bogey to move to a three-under total of 212.

Apart from a virtual top-it at the eighth, she holed birdie putts in the 10-17 foot (3-5 meter) range. What she came off the 18th, she was cited for the heartbroken Steinhauer made her charge.

CLIJSTERS

Clijsters battles Sharapova

SAN DIEGO—TOP SEED KIM CLIJSTERS held off a late fightback to beat Czech teen Nicole Vaidisova, 6-2 7-6, in the semifinals of the Acura Classic in San Diego on Saturday, setting up a final clash with Maria Sharapova.

No. 2 Sharapova was pushed hard by thirty Schnyder before winning, 7-5 6-4, to reach her first Acura final.

Clijsters, who picked up her 24th consecutive win in both tournament final court events, dominated early with power groundstrokes and winners to open up the first set.

"I'm hitting the ball deep and well," said Clijsters, who has won every major North American hard court title except San Diego.

"I'm moving well, my strokes are good and my game is falling into place. It's not moving well, but my second serve have been very good."

Clijsters, who also beat the Czech 17-year-old in the semifinals of finished last week, broke Vaidisova twice to open up a 3-0 lead in the second set.

But Vaidisova came storming back to break Clijsters three times and knew a tie-breaker.

The Czech failed to hold her serve, however, and Clijsters cruised to a 7-3 win.

"I didn't play great and but it a little bit in the end," Vaidisova said.

Sharapova served superbly to reach her first WTA Tour final since March in a match that lasted over two hours, 39 minutes.

Clijsters has a 4-0 edge over Sharapova, including the semifinals of the 2005 US Open.

"Clijsters' not only just a lot of balls back, they have a lot of pace on them," Sharapova said. "I need to take certain things away from her, but will play my game and see try to play anything extra special." Reuters

SHARAPOVA

Team USA ready to rock world hoops

GUANGZHOU, CHINA—THE UNITED STATES made its first appearance in basketball-mad China Sunday in preparation for the World Championships in Japan, as they seek revival regaining global supremacy.

Led by standouts Dwyane Wade, LeBron James and Carmelo Anthony, the team is aiming to again be No. 1 after finishing a disappointing sixth in the 2002 World Basketball Championships and taking bronze at the 2004 Olympics.

They will play warm-up matches here against China and Brazil.

"There are no more welfare," NBA Commissioner David Stern told AFP when asked if Team USA would have an easy time at the Global Championships.

On Monday, the Americans take on China, but NBA All-Star Yao Ming remains unsure if he will be healthy enough to make his first appearance with the national side since breaking a foot in April.

"Right now the injury is about 80 percent recovered, but there is still a little bloodthirsty," Yao told the Chinese press in Beijing.

"The doctors are willing me to look at this from the long-term perspective and avoid high-level competition, so although I'll be to Guangzhou, I might not play."

Watch promoters are making no promises.

"We're pictures in playbooks on billboards and buses throughout this southern city in advance for the games when tickets will cost from up to $473, or above the annual income of a Chinese farmer.

On Tuesday Team USA will play Brazil here before two warm-up games in South Korea ahead of the championships in he played in Japan from Aug. 19-Sept. 3.

"My main concern is with my own team, how we play each time at practice and in the games," head coach Mike Krzyzewski said. "My part is to get our players from a number of years to play together as one team." AFP

This early, Pereiro feels like Tour de France king

VIGO, SPAIN—OSCAR PEREIRO DO tongue thinks of himself as runner-up in the Tour de France.

"How I consider myself the winner," he told a press conference in his hometown on Saturday.

The Tour itself renowned Floyd Landis as its champion Saturday after the second of two stiff samples tested positive for higher-than-allowable levels of testosterone. Steve Bonley, who leads the French anti-doping council, said the synthetic testosterone apparently occurred naturally that it came from an outside source.

Tour de France director Christian Prudhomme said Landis was no longer considered champion.

Runner-up Pereiro would be the likely new winner, but Prudhomme said the decision was up to Landis of the side were with the International Cycling Union.

Pereiro said he felt badly for Landis, whom he thought must be living in the worst days of his life.

"I consider him my friend, I supported me and had one to lose what had been passed to him," he said.

But Pereiro said he regretted not having been able to celebrate a win properly in Paris, wearing the winner's yellow jersey, having his photograph taken on the podium.

"I would have liked to have lived that day, it would have been the best day of my life, as a sportsman," Pereiro said.

He said riders at the Tour had underwent 600 doping tests. Landis has said he was tested nine times, and Pereiro said Saturday he went through four doping checks.

"The bad thing is that the winner should have failed," Pereiro said. "I trust Floyd, but the analytic shows he may have broken a rule. He failed an anti-doping test. If you fail the system set, then you have to be withdrawn."

Supportive

Meanwhile, in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, Landis' parents planned a "Go! Slim, Went Camping" sign in their front yard Saturday, leaving it to friends and neighbors to defend their son against the doping scandal that threatens his Tour de France title.

Tammy Harris, one of the Landis' neighbors and closest friends, said Landis has proven his "outstanding skill" to cycling and that he ultimately will be exonerated.

"If he has accomplished, he has senatorial through his hard work and discipline," she said of her home in Farmersville, a rural crossroads just outside the borough of Ephrata in eastern Pennsylvania.

Paul and Esther Landis, devout Mennonites, always have defended their son against the doping accusations and insist of his claims.

At Green Mountain Cyclery, the Ephrata bike shop where Landis bought his first mountain bike, owner Mike Barrington said Saturday he doesn't believe Landis did anything wrong.

"My opinion and personal beliefs is Floyd have not changed in the last 15 years, and they are not about to start changing now." AP

OSCAR Pereiro feels like he's on top of the world right now.

TOLEDO JR CUP

Piccio stumbles in playoff

PICCIO

MIA PICCIO MISSED WINNING HER SECond Junior Amateur Golf Scholars (JAGS) bout title in Davao would when she lost in a playoff to Jefferson Jung of California in the 2006 Toledo Junior Cup at the Granite Bridge Golf Club in Corona, California over the weekend.

The 14-year-old Piccio, who ended the season 2006 JAGS Jack & Barbara Rocco Memorial Main Tournament at the California Country Club in Hilmar, fought back from the strokes down in the first round to surge to a two-shot lead with three holes left only to either tie his 36-when-the-front out of bounds.

Jung birdied that hole to go 1-up again only to forgive the win, enabling the Irvine-based Filipino descendant to draw level and force the sudden-death in the 18-hole tournament for players aged 12 to 18.

But Piccio, who is in the national pool of talents under the JCTM golf program, flubbed her birdie putt from 10 feet in the playoff. Jung then harnessed the last nail on the win, sinking an eight-foot birdie putt to close out.

"I missed the line of my putt. But next time, this gonna get back at her," said Piccio, who closed out with a one-over par 73 to tie Jung, who doubled with a 76, at 216.

Jared de Villa, the other Filipino in the field, finished ninth with a 463 after an 82.

It was indeed a story lost for Piccio, who finished outs of the first-run holes in the second round to come fough five-shot lead and then pounced on her child's back-to-back three-putt bogeys to pulse two-stroke lead after 12 holes.

Meanwhile, Mike Alexander notched for ninth place in the Sacramento Gin Junior Championship at the Haggin Oaks Golf Club last week.

Alexander's had rounds of 75-75 for 150, six shots off the winner. He will next play in Stockton City and the Amador County Championship. — Gerald T. Tupas, PTN Overseas Bureau

San Beda, RTU draw first blood

SAN MIDA COLLEGE ALABANG, LAST year's seniors B champions, headed on South Alabang Muntinlupa to University, 73-24, yesterday in the NBSCAA 37th season basketball tournament at the College of St. Benilde gym.

Abuc and Mendiago each scored game-highs of 10 points to lead the Red Lions to their first win in the country's first and only tri-level league for women.

SBCA is now in Group A, along with 30th season seniors A winner AMA Computer University.

JPAU absorbed its second defeat in as many starts, following a 87-13 loss dealt by St. Scholastica's College on opening day last Saturday at the Ateneo Avenue.

Rizal Technological University, 36th season overall seniors champion, likewise entered the win bracket with a 97-40 win over Manila Apostolic College-Manila.

Other seniors games yesterday saw Benilde downing Centro Escolar University, 52-42, and La Consolacion College-Manila stopping University of Asia and the Pacific, 77-28.

The NSCAA 37th season is being supported by Solar Sports, Adidas, Cliff the cleanser and official balls Wilson and Molten.

Mirian College, still playing World City Colleges, as of press time, also won on Saturday against newcomer St. Jerome of Avida, 70-42, while Angelican College won in juniors encounter over host St. Stephen's High School, 53-36.

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Hawks regain winning touch, rip Holy Angel; Hawklets up

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE TEAM THAT OWNS THE LONGEST winning streak in the league finally broke its longest losing run in the young history of Athletic Association of Schools Colleges and Universities (Visayas) season.

University of Manila finally found the winning groove of the purple and ended its five-victory after three losses by beating Holy Angel University, 74-61, yesterday at the CM Gym.

The Hawks, who failed to be wowed by impressive victories still-old, relied on old-timers Bobi Jarangue, Ouster Dagdag and Mela Mallari who responded with double-digit performances.

After losing last year's MVP in the

[illegible] and veterans Grace Bernales, the five-time champions Hawks played listlessly and bowed to newcomer Jay Mehallan Cortes, last year's runner-up STI and AMA Computer College.

"The competition is getting tough, and it's good for the league," said seven-UM coach Mc Tolentino.

Jarangue stepped up by registering with 19 points, while Dagdag and Mallari had 16 and 12 points, respectively, for the Hawks.

In the first game, the Hawklets outed the Baby Pirates, 85-44, to remain undefeated after three games. MIU took its fourth loss in as many games.

The scores:
Ironclaw (81)

UM 74 — Cadiz 19, Ebon 10, Ram 7, Hernandez 7, Gabiga 5, Bakin 1, Ram 1, Lazo 0, Cabal 0, Mohammad 0, Lorete 2, Edoria 2, Dalmacio 0, Dagdag 2, Mallari 12, Jarangue 19.

HAN 61 — Gallos 10, Uriarte 8, Bilangel 9, Arangote 2, Rota 4, Gamal 2, Ramasquer 7, Mercado 2, Jalaqui 7, Pangilinan 2, Rosal 2, Lobaton 3.

Quarters: 23-6, 40-18, 72-28, 81-44.

Second Game (1st)

UPH 19 — Gallego 10, Halos 11, Mallo 12, Ancenio 9, Gobet 5, Jones 4, Hayme 4, Dalmacio 3, Quiroz 2, Roeder 2, Gabiot 0, Flores 0.

MIU 85 — Cubio 14, Batuyog 15, Ambion 10, Aspera 8, Gonel 2, Rivera 2, Arnaldo 2, Garcia 2, Gadiel 2, Tongol, Lavarez, absent.

Quarters: 12-12, 32-28, 61-43, 74-61.

Mauricio-Mendoza tops Valley Mizuno Scramble

ADRIAN MAURICIO AND MATTHEW Mendoza combined for a nine-under par 63 to top 20-team 18-y scramble in the recent kick-off leg of the Mizuno Scramble Classic at the south course of the Valley Golf and Country Club at the foothills of Antipolo.

Mauricio and Mendoza came out of a 20-minute rain delay to submit the day's lowest score and slip past the tandem of Marco Oliveo-Kenneth Ladrido in the private division contest to teams with average handicaps of 9.9/10.9.

Luis Lazarus-Joel San Mateo topped Division B (10-16.9) while Val Salvador teamed up with daughter Adrienne to edge Division B (17-24) in the 18-hole format also supported by Outback, Pagcor, BMW Philippines, Philippine Airlines, Pearl, Eastwest, SMC Golf, Power Bar, Golfer Digest and Lion Hrts.

The three pairs became the first qualifier for the the grand finals next year at the Santa Cruzwhich Tourney course where the winners will vie in all-expense paid trips to Japan with many taken in the DOE Mizuno Classic in Iwate.

Tour prizes, trophies and gift certificates were awarded by Mizuno sports chief Gerard Gopez and marketing manager Paolo Cagulangan. Mizuno is the distributor of Mizuno products in the Philippines.

BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Maronilla • Assistant Editor Carrie S. Mariano

Fitch says RP banking system remains weak

Cites poor accounting, cartel-like behavior

By Doris C. Dumlao

LONDON-BASED CREDIT WATCHDOG FITCH RATINGS HAS EXpressed concern over the quality of Philippine banks' corporate governance, citing their high level of related-party lending, "weak" accounting and disclosure practices as well as tendency to act as a cartel.

In a special report dated Aug. 3, Fitch said better corporate governance among local banks could result in improved financial performance and bode well for risk management, and in turn improve their credit ratings.

"However, there is little sign of this happening in the foreseeable future," the report said.

Philippine banks are at the low end of Fitch's rating scale, with the individual ratings of the larger banks generally at "D/E" and others at "E."

Fitch said the "D" banks' ratings were being held down by exposures to interest rate risk in a domestic environment that could be susceptible to rate increases. It noted that the "very small" balance sheets, underlying profitability and corporate governance would need to improve before a rating upgrade could become achievable.

The rating agency also noted that the use of "truly" independent directors in the country was limited.

Since the Philippines was initially not affected that much by the Asian currency turmoil of 1997, Fitch noted that there was less pressure for much-needed reforms in the banking system and thus little reform indeed occurred.

"Competition is constrained, with limita-

BTCH B4

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Foreign debt stands at P1.181 trillion
(April 2006, in billion pesos)

Source: Bureau of the Treasury
Kate E. Pedroso, PDI Research

Gov't exceeds VAT collection goal

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VAT System law generated P35.225 billion in additional revenue for the government in the first half of the year, exceeding the P31.84-billion target for the period by 23 percent.

Fiscal authorities said the government's first half performance bega is well on track to meet the full-year target of collecting P75 billion in additional revenue from the VAT.

The new VAT law (RA 9337) basically lifted the exemption of some previously exempted products like oil and electricity and raised the tax rate to 12 percent from 10 percent. The law likewise has revenue-enhancement provisions unrelated to VAT, such as the increase in the corporate income tax rate to 35 percent from 32 percent.

Documents from the Department of Finance showed that of the additional revenue collected in the first six months, the biggest share of P20.76 billion was delivered by the Bureau of Customs (BOC). The BOC's VAT collection was 9 percent higher than its P20-billion goal for the period.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) collected P12.47 billion in ad-

DEFICIT B4

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¥115.04 = ₱1
As of 5 p.m., Aug. 4, 2006

STOCK MARKET

One stock market report on Page B8

Stocks to track: earnings reports

INVESTORS ARE LIKELY TO MAKE THEIR cue from second-quarter profit results this week after a mixed bag of corporate earnings provided some distraction to the geo-political jitters last week.

"Second-quarter results have been mixed. Globe Telecom is doing very well, while some banks fell short of expectations, so it will just be as more numbers come out and give local equity investors something to drive on.

STORIES B4

With a lot of help from BPI Family Savings Bank, Riza Moises realized that success could just be a bus ride away.

Ms. Riza Moises was working as a manager of a bus company when she found out that there was a government program that encouraged fresh investments into the bus industry. Together with a partner, she decided to participate in that program. With a crew of just six people and three shuttle buses, she formed Genesis Transport Services in San Fernando, Pampanga.

"I'm the company's bookkeeper, owner and manager. I'm on top of things, from operational to financial matters", said Ms. Moises. Through her leadership, Genesis Transport was able to face and survive the biggest challenges that came its way, from the Pinatubo eruption crisis in Central Luzon to the current problem of high and volatile oil prices. Today, it has more than 100 buses and almost 800 personnel, mostly drivers and conductors.

Ms. Moises shared that Genesis Transport's growth wouldn't have been possible without the help of BPI Family Savings Bank. "The loans that we got from BPI Family allowed us to acquire additional buses. Thanks to them, I did not have to go through such a grueling process of sourcing out funds", added Ms. Moises.

The long-term plan of Ms. Moises is to attain full financial and operational stability for Genesis Transport, as well as to give the best compensation and benefits to her staff. "I guess, running the business and doing what ought to be done to make it a viable company are more than enough to keep me engaged and totally busy. And it's good to know that I can always rely on BPI Family Savings Bank for help!"

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3 airlines seek fuel surcharge hike

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By Rizz T. Olchondra

PHILIPPINE AIRLINES INC. (PAL), CEBU PACIFIC Air and China Airlines Ltd. have sought government permission to increase fuel surcharges that are included in their ticket prices.

In separate filings with the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), the airlines said that while the surcharges recovers would be an added burden on passengers, they stressed that the adverse effect of higher oil prices on their operating costs has left them with no alternative but to seek a higher fuel surcharge.

In its letter, PAL asked that it be allowed to double its fuel surcharge for the Philippines-to-Canada routes from $5 to $10.

China Airlines sought a $30-adjustment for two routes – Taipei-United States and Taipei-Canada. If its request is approved, the fuel surcharge of $30 for the two routes will increase to $60.

Cebu Pacific focused on fuel surcharges for domestic routes, its primary source of business. The budget carrier asked for adjustments in six route segments. It wanted an additional fuel surcharge of P100 for its Cagayan Mindanao flights (currently P800), P100 for Legazpi-Visayas (currently P600), P100 for routes within Visayas (currently P450), P60 within Visayas (currently P400), P60 within Mindanao (currently P500), and P60 for Visayas-Mindanao (currently P550).

"Unlike other airlines that are able to increase the regional surcharges in the level that these can partially subsidize the domestic ones, Cebu Pacific's regional operations only comprise a small part of its operations," Cebu Pacific said in its letter to the CAB.

"The wide array of low fares that are offered by the airline especially in the domestic sector, while stimulating more people to travel, does not leave the airline with a large buffer to accommodate increasingly high fuel prices," the carrier added.

The CAB has set separate hearings to give the three airlines a forum to justify their requests.

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INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

Kris' Oprah streak

RATHER THAN THE ONE STORIED NIGHT OF co-writing about and profiling from her issues and anthologies, Vida Aquino has decided, she tells Wheeling to publish her own magazine to chronicle her colorful life.

And, instead of just being a one-issue wonder as had originally been planned, the **arrow talk show host's E magazine** is well underway with a third issue by next week.

One of the glamorous duo of ABS-CBN Publishing stable, Kris first issue sold out more than 50,000 copies, according to the group's general manager-editorial director, Thelma Elenon San Juan.

The first issue, as well as the succeeding issues, refrained from the usual down his career but instead focused on tips, how-tos, and advice to young women, with Kris not only advising the cover but, like Oprah, doling out the advice as well.

Surprisingly, JC's second issue has outsold its Metro Manila, by more than 1.5 to 1, the local edition of the Cosmopolitan, the US glamor magazine **Kris' E** published against, according to an ABS-CBN Publishing market report.

But then again, E stills only PHx'issue, as against Cosmo's PY20. Besides, the second issue hit the newsstand a month earlier than the current Cosmo issue, which has Cecille Perez on cover versus "Kris' Secret Obsession" splashed on the other.

And, of course, E has the broadcasting morals of the ABS-CBN Group, not to mention the actress' popular game show, "Deal or No Deal," to keep the marketing brass.

Mother-daughter act

KOCHHAR: Rosemarie Arroza brought 40 years and medical personnel from St. Luke's Medical Center to Calauan City this coming weekend for an outreach program designed to help boost the congressional candidacy of her Harvard-educated daughter, Rachel.

According to the grapevine, the mother even managed to secure drugs and medical supplies for the mission from United Laboratories.

The third congressional district of Pangasinan is being vacated next year with the current incumbent having finished his third term, triggering a free-for-all fight even among the pro-GMA faithful.

The Arroyas own a 10-hectare mango plantation in Mabalacat town, which Rachel now uses as headstart for her congressional thrust.

PNB loses $4.4-M claim

LAWYER Vicente Claudio secured a stay order to getting his hands on the $4.44 million letter of credit issued to his company having the late Marcos years after the Supreme Court last week threw out a fresh appeal from Philippine National Bank.

PNB had been opposing a 2001 order of the Supreme Court to transfer the $4.4 million from instrument to an interest-bearing account in Land Bank, as Claudio had petitioned, until the court determine whether Claudio or the government owns the contested amount.

Money-go-round

■ PAGCOR & GAMBLE transferred to more than P2-billion media and advertising budget from Procter & Gamble to Mediacom of the Kroy Global Group.

■ MANUEL Ang Jr., whose family owns 20 percent of 3M Investments, has retired as managing director of the 600 Supermarket chain.

■ SHABARI has been ordered by the Supreme Court to pay P500,000 in damages to an Eroska doctor, Imrana Imanal Sikkiram, whose credit card was not only twice turned down but even seized during a 1991 trip to Jakarta. Shabari claimed that it was only trying to protect Pelkoman, a card holder of good standing for the past 19 years prior to the incident, after his Mastercard had apparently been cloned in Indonesia.

Heard through the grapevine

BSW has been fined P1 million by the Securities and Exchange Commission for the nonsubmission of 2005 annual and other quarterly reports. These oversights happened despite the Convergion company having for independent director, whose duties include compliance with reportorial requirements, no less than a former SEC chief, Lilia Bautista.

(Email: cocktails_pd@philstar.net or cocktails_pd@yahoo.com)

Fitch says RP banking system remains weak

From page B1

more on foreign bank involvement and expansion resulting in control-like behavior by the local banks—so while the revenues are good, efficiency is poor, as is technological investment and product development," Fitch said.

While it was favorable that the government had tightened regulations and requirements to keep with international accounting standards, Fitch said it remained to be seen as to what extent this could be enforced.

"Performance by a regulatory powerless to enforce its rules has been a feature of the system for many years," Fitch said.

Fitch was also skeptical on the extent to which accounting inequity and disclosure among local banks would improve despite the shift to a more stringent regime based on the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Narrowing to the Philippines has been very poor and Fitch remains concerned that the inertia of banks investment to be downgraded the just-one-level accounting," it said.

"Ultimately, it would seem that for there to be a true change in the (corporate governance) practices of Philippine banks, more diversified bank ownership will be required," it summed.

Philippine banking is dominated by about a dozen big banks controlling 77 percent of system-wide assets and a few foreign banks which control 16 percent of total assets. Of the dominant local banks, two are government-owned banks.

"The others are mostly listed but are all controlled by local families/conglomerates, all of which have substantial non-bank investees," it said.

"(Corporate governance) requires a separation of function between the board, executive management and audit, and implementation to help. The independence and authority of such functions needs to extend to more than only legal but to, "the report said.

Gov't . . .

From page B1

dividend revenue from the NGC. This was 187-percent higher than its P6.83-billion goal for January to June.

The BIR imposes a VAT on domestically produced goods and services, while the Customs charges VAT on all imports.

Gross VAT collection stood at P53.48 billion. But this amount does not net out the revenue impact of measures mitigating the impact of the law on purchasing power and the input VAT claimed by corporate taxpayers.

Of the gross VAT collections, the 2-percentage point increase in the VAT rate contributed P12.37 billion while the lifting of exemptions yielded P13.33 billion.

Other VAT reforms provided for in the law including the capping of input VAT credits that firms may claim, generated P5.41 billion of the gross VAT collections.

Revenue enhancement measures under RA 9337 that are not related to VAT, such as the increase in the corporate income tax rate, had a P4.17 billion share of the gross VAT collections.

Measures intended to ease the impact of VAT on purchasing power resulted in foregone revenues worth P7.93 billion.

The mitigating measures include the reduction of excise taxes on petroleum products, the repeal of the franchise tax on power distribution, the lifting of common carriers tax on interport, and the removal of excise tax on natural gas, among others.

Input VAT claims of corporate taxpayers under the gross VAT collection by P13 billion.

The BIR and the BOC are hard-pressed to meet the government's target of raising P73 billion in additional revenue for the government for the full year. The government's collection performance in terms of collecting the VAT, considered the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda, is closely watched by credit rating agencies and foreign investors.

Stocks to track . . .

From page B1

and a bit of direction," said Edgar Bautista, head of research at ATR Kim Eng Securities.

The stock market rose 33 points or 1.4 percent to 2,360.48 last week.

AB Capital Securities said that market sentiment might turn local if the remaining profit reports due next month are within expectations.

"It also begs the question whether the troubles abroad are powerful enough to offset strong earnings. We believe that the overall momentum is strong, rather than the likelihood that the market will have a major meltdown," AB Capital Securities wrote in a weekly note.

Investors are also likely to track the results of the US Federal Open Market Committee's policy-setting meeting on Aug. 8. AB Capital Securities noted that the market was anxious over whether the fed would continue to raise rates. Elizabeth L. Sanchez

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More banks tap debt markets

Investor appetite improving

By Dan's C. Dumlao

PHILIPPINE BANKS ARE HEADing the debt markets here and abroad to prepare for the shift to more stringent capital adequacy requirements imposed on them by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Philippine National Bank announced on Friday the successful closing of its subordinated debt or tier 2 notes offering after subscriptions reached P7.82 billion, or 2.6 times the original offer size of P3 billion.

To maximize the strong market response, PNB increased the issue size to P5.5 billion.

Proceeds from the offering, which was managed by ING Bank, would be used to strengthen PNB's capital base and bolster its capital adequacy ratio from 17 percent to 22 percent.

Also, Bank of Commerce had secured the Monetary Board approval for the issuance of P800 million worth of subjected tier 2 notes in the local market to complete its plan to boost capital by P1.5 billion.

BoC was earlier given the go-signal to offer as much as P1.5 billion worth of tier 2 notes but it issued only P1.2 billion. The executive is now in the process of adequacy ratio to about 15 percent from 12.6 percent.

BSP Deputy Governor for bank supervision Nestor Espenilla Jr. said there was a strong interest among banks to raise capital as soon as possible to take advantage of the favorable market conditions.

He said these banks would like to maximize the strong investor appetite for all kinds of instruments from Philippine issuers.

Espenilla said the success of the Republic of Treasury's $750-million bond issue was a reflection of strong investor interest.

State-owned Development Bank of the Philippines and Land Bank of the Philippines also hope to complete their respective listing among activities overseas.

DBP hopes to pursue its planned perpetual bond offering of up to $150 million by next month after holding roadshows in Singapore, Hong Kong and London. DBP president Reynaldo David said.

Landbank also plans to raise as much as $100 million through a tier 2 subordinated debt offering.

While banks across the region are cleaning up the bad assets that piled up since the 1997 Asian currency turmoil, regulators are fine-tuning their regulatory and supervision practices in line with the standards of the Bank for International Settlements which issued Basle 2 as the new framework for capital adequacy.

In the Philippines, tougher risk management guidelines have compelled banks to issue tier 1 (equity) and consider other ring very-like debt instruments, including perpetual bonds.

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INFOTECH

Editor Lee Magno

Filipino shines at US professional video game tilt

SCREENSHOTS from Project Gotham Racing 3 on the Xbox 360

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

WHILE THE PHILIPPines is still getting its groove in predecessional video gaming, one Filipino is already a step ahead and is now competing at a predecessional level. In fact, the Philippine gaming team going to Monaco, lady for the upcoming World Cyber Games Finals might count him there.

Just two weeks ago, 17-year-old Eljimpo from Bonifacio took second place in the Xbox 360 Project Gotham Racing 3 game category in the first Championship Gaming Invitational held in San Francisco, California.

Dimagiba, who went with the gaming tag "Sidekick0" (ostensibly stemming "one with an Xbox 360" in Filipino), went home with $6,000 in prize money.

He beat out the champion of the PGR3 event, Emmanuel "MMTTB" Rodriguez, also of the Dutch line first and a $12,500 awards of prizes.

The Championship Gaming Series (CGS) is the latest professional gaming tournament in the US. A subsidiary of two among Time/TI Inc., Microsoft Xbox Division, Broadcast Inc. San Francisco Media, ESPN2 coverage event and Best Buy.

In an e-mail interview with Inquirer, Dimagiba said the CGS was his first major attempt at professional gaming. He had previously joined the PGR3 category of the US World Cyber Games and it currently unranked number one, with a chance to compete in the upcoming WCG in October.

Dimagiba, who lives with his immigrant parents in Oxnard, California, said he chose to play PGR3 since it was the most exciting game for the Xbox 360 console. Archo PGR3 to the only game that he has played professionally.

"I picked up on the game real late and after a few months, I got pretty good at the game and happened for the WCG online preliminaries where I ranked first and was given an opportunity to represent them at the Championship Gaming Invitational," Dimagiba said.

Dimagiba was born in the US in 89, spins parents, a mother from Cebu and father from Makati. Like most parents, they were worried about their son playing too much videogames and initially did not support him.

"They didn't really support me when gaming would take up the majority of my day and didn't really value professional gaming constantly but after bringing home $5,000 from the CGS, some of their thoughts on professional gaming have changed," said Dimagiba.

Despite taking second place from the CGS and a total $5,000, Dimagiba said he does not plan to go for a full-time job as a professional gamer but will make it a professional hobby especially since he is preparing for college.

"I'd have to balance my gaming and education. But as long as I'm in the top of the game, then yes, no doubt I'll take every opportunity to compete. After college, I'd want to get some kind of career involved with making the most games as an axiom or producing video games, something along the lines of gaming," he said.

Dimagiba, who had visited the Philippines three times already, also watched good luck in the Philippine cause to the WCG.

"I remember visiting relatives in the Philippines when I was visited in Quezon during by some of the people there," he said.

FOR: can move cells to another Microsoft Excel worksheet without using the cut/copy/paste function

Moving cells to another Worksheet without using cutting, pasting

By Jerry Liao

1) SELECT THE CELL OR CELLS THAT you intend to move or copy.

2) Hold down the ALT key or you drag a cell or range onto the tab of the desired worksheet.

3) Hold activates that worksheet and allows you to continue dragging the selection to the spot where you want to move it.

4) To copy the selection rather than move it to another worksheet, hold down CTRL as well when you drag.

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Blogger starts 'PayPal Philippines' campaign

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

A HELP-CHEERING PROFESSIONAL Filipino blogger is leading a campaign to bring PayPal into the Philippines.

PayPal is a service that allows payments and money transfers through the Internet. It is emerging as an alternative way to traditional means of payment, such as checks and money order. It is currently used to process payments for online vendors and auctions sites like eBay. This e-commerce service in turn charges a fee.

Angelo Ramona (http://ramona.com.ph) argued that Filipino knowledge workers earning dollars to come from doing outsourced jobs would benefit from this campaign.

"We have a great pool of young and eager hire that's just waiting to be tapped, such as writers, web and software developers and designers. However we have so easy and efficient payment gateway and this turns companies away," said Ramona in an e-mail interview with Inquirer.

Ramona said an "underground economy" that is where Filipino knowledge workers doing contract work for foreign firms now exists in the Philippines. They are not working for any business process outsourcing firm based in the country.

He said a handful of local professionals are doing projects from their homes. In his case, he now works for a North American firm. He is paid directly through money transfer. However, such a small-time system takes big cuts from his earnings.

"They are not convenient. If only we had PayPal in the Philippines, then I think we would be able to open to the world better access to our pool of talent. PayPal won't deal with us. It's probably because we have a history of having the potential for money laundering authorities. Or maybe it's because of poor security in banking or credit card transactions," he added.

Efira acquired PayPal in October 2002. This was after eBay discovered that PayPal was the payment method of choice by more than 1/4 percent of eBay users, and the service competed with eBay's subsidiary Billpoint, a Wikipedia entry on PayPal said (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pay_Pal).

Wikipedia is a website content that allows anyone to update entries which are definitions of various terms.

A local industry observer who declined to be named said the "PayPal for the Philippines" campaign could start lobbying with eBay Philippines.

He said that the campaign should also accumulate the banking sector.

Benguet high school linked to the Internet

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

BAGUIO CITY—A HIGH SCHOOL IN Itogon, Benguet has been wired to the Internet through an initiative of a Philippine Australian telecommunications company and its partners.

Under the "Smart Schools" program, the Mt. Pinabacdao National Science High School (MPNHSH) was given a year of free wireless broadband Internet service.

Apart from providing connectivity to schools, the program also aims to provide relevant content to the over 700 students in the school.

Smart Communications officials said the company also worked with the Philippine Business for Social Progress organization, Microsoft Philippines, and Inom.ph (e-mentor@information.and communications technology training on teachers at the school.

AMPHAWIS was previously a beneficiary of a computer equipment grant from the Department of Trade and Industry under the latter's PCs for Public Schools program.

Smart said it has connected around 58 schools since it launched its program in December 2004.

Cops raid Tacloban shop

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

POLICE SEIZED EMPLOYEES AND ILLEGAL software worth over a million pesos in a raid in Tacloban City.

Government agents raided two establishments of the Electrocomputer Data Systems located in the Pilar Street and Zamora Street, in Tacloban City.

Items confiscated include equipment used for the illegal copying of software programs from Microsoft and other software makers.

Police and Eddie S. Uy, owner of the two EDS establishments, now faces a copyright infringement case.

Police also stated that EDS is an established computer store in Tacloban City.

The Philippine Anti-Piracy Team led this continuing campaign against software piracy in the Philippines. The group's members include the National Bureau of Investigation, the Optical Media Board and the Philippine National Police.

Agents from the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, Intellectual Property Protection Group, Anti-Fraud and Commercial Crimes Division (CIDG-AIPO/IPR) from Metro Manila and from Regional Criminal Investigation Units each after getting a search warrant from Judge Antonio M. Esparcia Jr. of Branch 24 of the Manila Regional Trial Court.

In a statement, PNP CIDG Director Jesus Versoza warned the police will conduct more raids in other urban areas in the country.

"It is a shame that a supposedly legitimate business has to turn to scrupulous activities such as selling of pirated software just to earn additional profits. The PNP will continue to go after violators of the IPR law as directed by Police Director Versoza to eradicate the government's continuing illegal activities," added Versoza.

The raid in Tacloban City followed similar raids in Batangas and Olongapo, police said.

Volunteer engineers start computer livelihood training in RP

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

CANADIAN VOLUNTEERS collectively called "Engineers Without Borders" (EWB) is now engaged in computer livelihood projects in the Philippines, Inquirer learned.

Under a project called "Training Computer Access Locally and Abroad," Ilcolad the group is establishing computer livelihood training centers nationwide. Some of these centers are located in Iriga, Bagiuo City and Lanao, Iligan.

According to the group's website (http://www.ewb.ca/en/whereweworkwithus/previous/ecuador.html), the project aims to create jobs for an estimated 1.2 million out-of-school youths between the ages of 15 and 24 who are unemployed.

Citing the National Youth Commission's studies, the EWB said there is an urgent need to give underprivileged Filipino youth access to livelihood programs.

The EWB is working with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on this project. They have already developed a model of for the computer livelihood training project. Both are now working to establish 15 centers throughout the Philippines. EWB members in Canada provide funds and computers for the livelihood project.

The EWB website said volunteers arrived early this year. They are now working in the Philippines to help build the DSWD's capacity to support and expand the program.

The goal is to let DSWD run the program independently, EWB said.

"The Philippines is a distinctly appropriate country for training a program involving modern communications technologies because of its basic, English language skills, high literacy rate and emerging IT sectors. As such, computer literate graduates are expected to have marketable skills and be employable within their community" read an entry in the EWB website.

RP IT spending to grow 10.4% in next 5 years: IDC

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

RESEARCH FIRM INTERNATIONAL DATA Corporation (IDC) predicts a 10.4-percent annual growth of IT spending among Philippine companies from now until the year 2010.

In its report titled "Philippine IT Spending Client Segmentation 2006-2010," IT expenditure in personal/digital computers, desktop computers and networking products would still be the main priority among local enterprises, encompassing 63 percent of all IT spending in 2006.

This is followed by 22 percent for the IT services spending and lastly, 11 percent is for software purchases.

Spending on services and software is expected to be driven by complexity of IT infrastructure, which has been demanding more data security and management processes.

Most of the demand would come from the telecommunications and healthcare sectors, banking and discrete manufacturing verticals.

The demand is also spurred by companies wanting to achieve a higher level of business efficiency to be able to offer innovations and to remain competitive.

The IDC report also compared IT spending in 2006, which was just slightly different in terms of spending on hardware, which was pegged at 64 percent.

However, IT services expenditure was at 21 percent and software spending was at 11 percent.

IDC noted that 2006 was a turning point for the Philippines as the electoral process since 1992 is growth for the IT industry, which hit 20 percent to reach $1.4 billion brought about by fresh IT investments and renewed commitment from the end users community.

Auto parts maker pursues 4-yr investment program

Firm to install new equipment, test systems

By Hanna W. Domingo

LIBERAL FIRM TEMIC AUTOMOtive Philippines Inc. is pushing ahead with its four-year, 77 million-euro investment program in support to vehicle parts manufacturing operations in the country, a company official said.

Tapi is the local unit of tire maker Continental AG and is under the parent firm's Frankfurt-based Continental Automotive Systems, which in 2003 acquired Temic, the automotive electronics business of industry giant Daimler-Chrysler.

Thomas Intelberger, who sits at the executive board of Continental AG, said Tapi was set to lay out an average of 11 million euros a year under the investment program, which would subsume with an outlay of up to 20 million euros in 2007.

Intelberger said the additional investment would come to the form of new plant equipment, machinery, test systems as well as in-service training for employees.

Tapi is headquartered at the PTI Bonne in Tagaig. It has a manufacturing facility in Calamba, Laguna, which represents Tapi's major investment in 2006.

The official said Tapi turns out an average of 250 million euros in export value yearly, a fifth of which is produced in Calamba.

The company operates production lines that churn out electronic components and systems for electronic brake systems and body electronics that are shipped out to assemblers that carry the brands BMW, Toyota, Nissan, Ford, Audi, Volvo and Kia.

Also, Intelberger said Tapi was strengthening ties with local universities to build up a system for upgrading the skills of its workers.

One such tie-up is with the Technological University of the Philippines, where Tapi has set up what has been dubbed as the Continental University-a single room dedicated for the exclusive training of Tapi employees.

The training program follows a worldwide Continental program of innovative training by company engineers aimed at establishing an internal foundation of quality based on sustained education for workers.

Intelberger said Tapi had so far set aside some $150,000 for the training of at least 20 resident workers.

He said that globally, Continental had set aside 50 million euros for training.

The official added that Tapi was collaborating with other educational institutions such as DualTech System, Polytechnic University of the Philippines and the Don Bosco system.

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Corruption charges vs the insurance commissioner

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES
Henrietta C. Genereal

CORRUPTION CHARGES HAVE been filed at the Ombudsman against Insurance Commissioner Evangeline Escribillo.

The charges revolve around the plans to put up a Compulsory Third Party Liability (CTPL) processing system, more commonly known in the insurance industry as the clearing house, where every CTPL policy will be electronically processed and authenticated.

The clearing house concept makes sure that the premiums and taxes are collected and remitted and, more importantly, claims are paid quickly and promptly.

The clearing house is designed to finally solve the long-festering problems of fake CTPL policies where the government is deprived of rightful revenue, and, worse, valid claims remain unpaid.

The clearing house makes with use of information technology. The broker or agent is connected electronically with the clearing house, the participating bank and the LTO. Everytime you, or, you first pay the premium and taxes to the insurance broker or agent, your money (or you pay over-the-counter at the bank). The agent, in turn, goes to his laptop and emails his bank to debit his account with the amount you paid. The agent hands you the policy, which is your CTPL policy or certificate of cover (COC). You or your agent brings the COC to the LTO. The computers at LTO authenticates your COC. The registration goes through. There is the only way you can register your car.

Since your COC is authentic, there is no reason why a claim cannot be paid on the regulatory five days after the submission of all supporting papers.

The insurance companies, all members of good standing of the Philippine Insurance and Reinsurance Associations Inc. (Pira) set up a separate corporation to run the clearing house, under the single-eyed supervision of the Insurance Commission.

Since the vehicle owner has to buy his CTPL policy only through the clearing house, the Commissioner has been charged with establishing a "combination or union of trade" or a cartel, which is not allowed under the Constitution. This is the main ballroom of the charges leveled against the Commissioner.

The Constitution does not allow a combination or association of trade or a cartel, because it restricts or avoids competition. Without competition in a free and open market, prices are kept artificially high, goods are choked, and services lousy. But in CTPL policies, there is no competition in pricing or product design. Since the policy is compulsory, the wordings and prices are fixed. The competition is in the servicing of the policy.

In the landslide-clearing house, the vehicle owner has full freedom to choose from some 90 insurance companies. He also can choose his insurance broker or agent. If, later on, he finds the service of his insurer, broker or agent unsatisfactory, he can always switch. There is absolutely no restriction of trade.

It is true that an insurance company has to be a member of good standing of Pira. But who wants to buy a CTPL policy from a company that is not a member of good standing?

Finally, there is the little known provision in the insurance code which says that, if you walk into the largest insurance office in the archipelago, you cannot be refused a CTPL policy even if all you want is to insure your one and only mahogany tricycle. Where is the restriction of trade?

I am sure the Ombudsman will throw the case out in record time.

Meralco, Napocor to sign deal

Agreement to allow large customers to choose their power suppliers

By Abigail L. Ho

MANILA ELECTRIC CO. and National Power Corp. will forge within the next two weeks an agreement covering the "Customer Choice Program," which will allow some of Meralco's large customers to choose their power suppliers.

Under the scheme, Meralco customers with an average monthly demand of at least 1 megawatt (MW) can source their power requirement from their supplier of choice.

Meralco president and chief operating officer Jesus Francisco said Meralco had period of August with lead profiles that could be of help in implementing the program.

Francisco said that with those load profiles, Napocor should do simulations on how the Customer Choice Program could be implemented. The simulations would be based on the same three-time-of-use (TOU) rates.

The customers and operations of the wholesale electricity spot market (Wesm), which started last June 26, made the process of formulating the Customer Choice Program guidelines more complicated, he said.

"The entry of the Wesm introduced some questions, so some customers may rethink their plans to participate in the program," he said.

In a letter sent to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in April, Meralco chair and chief executive officer Manuel Lopez gave an "unconditional offer" to exclude big industrial and commercial customers from the distribution utility's captive market, even before the declaration of retail competition and open access.

Shortly after making that offer, Meralco informed its customers of the planned Customer Choice Program, saying in a letter that those who would not qualify for or benefit from Napocor's TOU rates could still opt for Meralco's average-related generation charges.

The Customer Choice Program could be implemented immediately after the Energy Regulatory Commission's approval of the details and mechanics of the new arrangements.

Once implemented, the program will enable Meralco's large commercial and industrial customers to take advantage of Napocor's TOU rates by shifting their load to off-peak hours, or times when rates were lower.

The TOU scheme provides Napocor customers with flexible hourly rates that are lowest during off-peak hours, or between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., and highest during peak hours, or from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Sundays and holidays are also considered off-peak period.

Rates are also lowest during the wet season, or from July to December, when electricity demand is usually lower due to the colder weather. Hydroelectric plants are also able to produce more power during these months.

DTI-IER electricity reserves include Napocor, other utilities

DBP posts 37% increase in net profit to ₱2B

By Doris C. Dundas

STATE-OWNED DEVELOPMENT BANK OF the Philippines posted P2 billion in net profit in the first semester, up by 37 percent from a year ago.

DBP president Reynaldo David said the bank's gross income rose by 13.84 percent to the first six months to P9.07 billion from P7.63 billion a year ago, for gross loan portfolio rose 29.36 percent to P121.4 billion.

"The bank is on track in achieving its development targets for the year, and it has remained a financially sound government financial institution," David said in a statement.

"Our good financial returns have given us better leverage to invest in new initiatives enabling us to effectively and efficiently pursue our thrusts and programs designed to help the government attain its development agenda for the country," he added.

Exclusive of inter-bank loans, DBP financed ₱86.81 billion in development projects, higher than the ₱56.76 billion disbursed to consumers and projects during the period.

David said DBP's portfolio for development projects reflected an increasing involvement in four priority thrusts—infrastructure and logistics, micro and small and medium enterprise development, environmental management and social services.

Total deposits rose by 39.1 percent to ₱81.08 billion from ₱44.2 billion in June 2005.

DBP's total assets reached P228.54 billion, up by 26.42 percent from P180.49 billion during the same period in 2005.

Its return on assets stood at 2.06 percent as of end-June, lower than the industry average of 9.2 percent as of March 2006.

The bank's capital adequacy ratio stood at 24.05 percent, well above the regulatory minimum of 10 percent.

DENR urged to stop mine firm operations in Palawan

MINING FIRM CITINICKEL MINES AND Development Corp. has asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the provincial government of Palawan to stop the operations of another mining company, Platinum Group Metals Corp. (PGMC), for allegedly non-executing and reporting mining activities without securing the necessary permits.

The call was contained in separate complaints filed with the DENR and the provincial government of Palawan.

Citinickel, in a statement, claimed PGMC was conducting nickel ore and other minerals on the basis of two small scale mining permits issued by Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes in November 2004. Under such permit, PGMC is allowed to extract no more than 50,000 metric tons of ore within two years.

However, Citinickel claimed that phase of PGMC's actual operations, ton of heavy equipment, conveyor systems, hundreds of box bodies, and copies of the bills of lading showed that PGMC had removed and exported about 800,000 metric tons of ore to date, far more than what is allowed by its local permits. Also, Citinickel stressed that PGMC's use of heavy equipment showed that the company was actually engaged in large, not small-scale, mining operations.

Also, the company statement said that neighboring communities had recorded the alarm bells over alleged pollution problems due to PGMC's mining operations. It said that farmers in the surrounding areas of the mine site in the Municipality of Narra had complained of heavy siltation resulting in reduced palay output in their respective farms.

"In protest to complaints against the activities of PGMC, which has shown utter disrespect for mining laws and regulations, as well as disregard for the conditions of its permits, it is now important that PGMC's small scale mining permits be withdrawn, amended or revoked to protect public interest," said Citinickel vice president Ernesto Rufloro in the statement.

He added that Olympic Mines and Development Corp.—which is Citinickel's predecessor-owned small original tenor of the Narra mine site—terminated its operating agreement with PGMC on April 24, 2006, citing the same violations Olympic allegedly complained about PGMC's alleged misrepresentation that it was the owner of Olympic's mine site when PGMC applied for its new Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA). Olympic later sold its interests in the said mine site to Citinickel through a deed of assignment dated June 9, 2005.

Citinickel claimed that despite the termination of the operating agreement with PGMC, the latter continued to operate and undertake mining works at the Narra mine site without its consent and over its continuing objection

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Demand for Manila cordage up on renewed oil drilling activities

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE FRENZIED SEARCH FOR new crude oil sources in the United States and the Middle East has led to an increase in the country's exported cordage, exporters said.

Exports of cordage made from the abaca fiber... one of the country's oldest agriculture-based exports... have increased by 6 percent to 6,120 tons in the first six months, said Manila Cordage Co. president and CEO Nicasio V. Canivel Jr.

"We are now experiencing an improvement in demand as the high fuel prices triggered more oil drilling in the US and in other countries," Canivel said in an interview.

Demand hardly grew in previous years as synthetic substitutes took over the cordage's market, particularly in the industrial and agricultural processing sectors.

He said higher demand also dampened the gains of Manila cordage by 30.4% to recorded 1.30 a kilo.

Manila Cordage is the country's largest producer of Manila cordage.

"We may see this improving demand until the end of the year," he added.

The Philippines is the world's only exporter and main supplier of abaca pulp, fiber and cordage.

Take closer look at agri, UN tells developing nations

Vital sector has been neglected, UNDP report says

By Ronnel W. Domingo

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE ASIA-Pacific like the Philippines need to put renewed emphasis on agriculture, especially the production of basic food crops, to protect the livelihood of the poor amid a global drive toward free trade.

This was one of the findings of the United Nations Development Program's Asia-Pacific Human Development Report 2006, released globally last June here and to be published locally next week.

"Agriculture, the bedrock of the poor, has been neglected and must be given new prominence because [the region] has become a net importer under free trade," UNDP said.

The report showed that cheap imports brought in through free trade have led to a sharp decline in domestic production of food staples in the Asia-Pacific, which had been a major food exporter in the past.

Data from the World Bank show that Philippine agricultural production accounted for 15-25 percent of GDP or total output from all sectors within a year.

This puts the country in the same league as population giants China, India and Indonesia as well as the Fiji, Kiribati, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu.

Thailand, which some scholars say is the closest comparable neighbor Asian economy to the Philippines, is grouped with the rich markets—Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Australia, South Korea, Mauritius and Malaysia—that had the same overall global level of agricultural output as in more than 10 percent of GDP.

The less well-off countries of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Mongolia, Bhutan and Cambodia produce between a quarter and two-fifths of their GDP from agriculture, while the least well-off—Nepal, Laos, Afghanistan and Myanmar—depend on agriculture for 40-83 percent of their domestic output.

"[Still], the promise of quick profits is encouraging rich farmers and agribusiness interests to increase the share of food production devoted cultivation of more profitable commercial crops," the report explained.

Moreover, UNDP said the poorest countries have become especially dependent on the global food market for basic food supply, considering their markets have been opened up for agricultural trade far more than those of the richer ones.

The agency added that trade expansion could damage poor farmers' incomes by causing sharp declines in prices, increases in the cost of inputs such as fertilizers, withdrawal of government support and irrigation or to farm-to-market roads, among others.

UN Assistant Secretary General Hafiz A. Pasha said: "Human development as a whole would suffer if, as a result of trade expansion, small-scale farmers are (so-compared) by imports but do not have access to no alternative sources of livelihood."

The report said that a remedy for the situation was for developing countries to promote the development of agriculture through price supports, affordable loans and other aid as well as strengthening land reform.

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Jollibee opens 11th US outlet

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FAST FOOD GIANT JOLLIBEE FOODS Corp. is going deeper into the United States market with the opening of its 11th store in Paramount City in Southern California.

Jollibee vice-president Tommy T. King said in Panorama store—which spans 3,332 square feet—opened last July 30 with a budget of roughly $450,000.

Jollibee will increase its US network to 12 stores when it opens its Las Vegas outlet in February 2007.

Undaunted by the supposed slowdown in sales growth this year, Jollibee said it would continue to reach out to overseas markets, particularly in China, United States and India, company officials said.

It is set to open its first store in China in Guangzhou province - and a Red Ribbon bakeshop in New Jersey, Jollibee chair Tony Tan Caktiong earlier told reporters.

The company also plans to open 20 restaurants under the Mongolian King brand in China this year. In India, it plans to acquire a fast-food chain.

Jollibee is spending about P1.3 billion for capital expenditures this year, which will include the setting up of 180 220 stores here and abroad.

Jollibee spends about $400,000 to put up a store, chief financial officer Ysmael Baysa said.

It is backed up by P1 billion in cash from operations, P17 billion in assets, and creditline, he said.

For any acquisition, it has an existing credit line of P6.5 billion, he added.

Sales growth of the fast-food giant was expected to ease moderately in the second quarter because of reduced consumer spending and increased utility costs.

System-wide sales—sales at both company-owned and franchised stores—rose 11.2 percent year-on-year to P38.4 billion in the first quarter.

LRTA proposes airport link

By Rita T. Olchondra

TRAVELERS COMING FROM ALONG NORTH as Monumento may soon be able to reach the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Manila Domestic Passenger Terminal using just one train, the Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) said.

This is due to the proposed construction of a line that will connect LRT1 to the airport terminals, which would greatly ease traffic and help increase productivity, according to LRTA administrator Mel Robles.

Robles credited the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) for initiating the proposed connection between LRT1 and the airport terminals, adding that that Nazir's Terminal 3 may be added to the route when it opens.

Robles said, however, that including Nazir would make the project presented much earlier at a cost of only $65 million. He said including Nazir would raise the project cost because an underground tunnel has to be built to accommodate the terminal.

The administrator said once Line 1 is connected with the domestic and terminal international, even those coming from as far North as Monumento can take just one train and get to the airport terminals in about 45 minutes. The same can be assured for south-bound travelers leaving the airport.

"The benefit here is that just like in foreign countries, [our] airports [will] have a railway system," Robles said. "You could even have swings one train for the whole line at the airport."

"Imagine, they just have to get on one train," the administrator said to Filipinos. "Just imagine how many cars go to the airport, [including] the well-to-do's."

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BIR out to redefine death, taxes

Revenue officials seek to impose estate tax on death benefits

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE IS studying a proposed regulation that will impose an estate tax to beneficiaries of insurance death benefits, particularly if the policies were purchased from foreign-registered insurance firms.

According to Revenue Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag, the BIR is reviewing whether the proposal is subject to legal limitations.

Buñag said imposing an estate tax to beneficiaries of death benefits from policies sold by foreign-registered insurance firms would be a good way to protect Philippine-registered insurance companies and level the playing field.

The move to review the imposition of estate tax was prompted by the problem confronting local insurance firms.

The Philippine Life Insurance Association Inc. (PLIA) earlier said the competitiveness of the domestic industry was being threatened by the unfair competition posed by insurance firms not registered to operate in the Philippines.

The group said that while Philippine-registered firms pay various taxes imposed on the sale of insurance policies, such as documentary stamp tax and premium tax, those that are not registered to operate in the Philippines are able to escape payment of taxes while getting a substantial market share.

PLIA has a pending complaint before the Insurance Commission against Swiss-based insurance firm Zurich, which is accused of selling its insurance products in the Philippines although it is not registered to operate in the country.

PLIA said that aside from Zurich, there are other smaller insurance firms doing the same.

Insurance Commissioner Evangelina Escalello recently said that the representative of Zurich has denied the allegations of the Philippine firms. Zurich officials denied selling insurance products in the Philippines, but PLIA strongly insisted Zurich insurance policies proliferate in the local market.

Zurich has been asked by the Insurance Commission to make a public advertisement that clearly states that it was not selling insurance policies in the Philippines.

Currently, beneficiaries of death benefits coming from an "irrevocable" type of insurance policy are not subject to estate tax. Only those coming from the "revocable" type of insurance policy are charged the said tax.

The "irrevocable" type of insurance policy does not allow changing the beneficiary of the death benefit, while the "revocable" type allows such a change.

The rate of estate tax ranges from 5 percent to 20 percent depending on the amount of wealth received.

A SMILE TO GO
Torrential rains in the region fail to dampen the smile on this girl's face as she sips a cup of hot coffee courtesy of the Cordillera Coffee Company. Over 60 families in Benguet derive benefits from the Cordillera plantation that grows 165 Arabica trees.

Mindanao assured of power supply

By Abigail L. Ho

RESIDENTS OF MINDANAO NEED NOT worry about power outages even if a severe landslide happens to obscure pipelines carrying steam to the 36- to 55-megawatt power facility in Davao.

According to the National Power Corp., the obscured steam pipelines caused by the recent spate of some 30 aftershocks (HNN) from the 6.8-quake.

Initial assessments indicate that it will take around a month to repair the damage.

While undertaking the repairs, Napocor vice president for Mindanao generation Henryzel Macatuno said the state firm had already identified other power sources as the root outages in the Mindanao grid, which has a peak demand of more than 1,000MW.

"Everything is under control," Macatuno said in a statement over the weekend. "We are closely monitoring the power situation. We have already arranged for replacement power coming from various sources such as the Davao Light and Power Corp. We would like to assure the people of Mindanao that Napocor is doing its best to provide them with their electricity needs."

Despite such dismal notion, he said NGPC had agreed to initially provide between 30 MW and 50 MW of power, should the system require it.

Other contingency measures include minimizing the dispatch of Napocor-owned power plants, land-based facilities and power barges.

The 300 MW Agus 6 power plant complex is owned by PSALM Corp. and is one of Napocor's independent power producers.

Beating the odds?

NO FREE LUNCH
Cielito F. Habito

DURING A RECENT CIVIL SOCIety presentation of the implementation of the Arroyo Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP), the ten-point agenda—captioned in the memorable "HEAT THE DEDs!"—was used as reference to rate the government's performance.

How well has each strategy been addressed so far? Below are my (opinion) ratings.

Balanced budget. The government is well on this way to keeping its deficit well below the target of P125 billion for the year. But this is mainly because the 2006 budget has not been passed. Economic managers know that balancing the budget is not an end in itself, as it means limiting its spending on much-needed social and infrastructure. There needs to be a proper balance between fiscal stability and providing the funds urgently and longer term needed by the people and the economy. I'd give the government an A- on this item.

Education for all. Education's share of the budget has dropped continuously since 1997. The government's target for gross enrollment ratio of 100 in 1 reflects the sorry state of public school facilities in the country. That the post of Secretary of Education was allowed to remain vacant for almost a year speaks volumes about the importance (or rather lack of it) given to education by the national leadership. And statistics point to declining school enrollment rates in many provinces of the country, leading to families' economic difficulties. Whether for school or economic reasons, I'm afraid the government rates no F on this one.

Automation of elections. The Commission on Elections remains mired in the controversy over the automation contract. But for the failed election computerization project that could have automated the 2004 elections. No significant headway is being achieved towards automating these the upcoming 2007 elections. The Comelec chairman's recent statement that we may be headed in a way that will inspire public confidence in the integrity of the electoral exercise. Another F rating.

Transport, digital infrastructure. The roll-on roll-off (Ro-Ro) program of the government has helped improve mobility of products from the countryside and increase freight traffic across the regions. However, far-off difficulties severely constrain further public investments in infrastructure (tariffs, and withstanding the recent NOSA premises. Five-quarter data in fact revealed a decline (negative growth) in the transport sector. Meanwhile, telecommunications and information technology are being put in place primarily by the private sector. I'd give the government a B- here.

Terminating insurgency. The government appears to be pursuing this goal on all fronts of the graveyard. Current policy is clearly to move into military action, while a "sign of terror" surrounds the murder of suspected dissidents around the country. But history tells us that the military solution can succeed only if accompanied by the persistent insurgency. Rather than solitude, violence and violent engagement have in fact been escalating lately, as dissidents only get further inflamed and emboldened by the government's renewed militarization of the countryside. Another F rating.

Healing the wounds of Edsa. The current government, itself installed by a peaceful Edsa uprising, is widely perceived to have spurned, and a directly challenging, the lessons of Edsa. Thus, rather than heal the old wounds of Edsa, it is instead bringing up new wounds that exacerbate the divisions among the Filipino people. Clearly another F.

Electricity, water for the unpoor. Private and community initiatives (like Manila Water's Tubig Para sa Barangay program) have been most instrumental in providing the poor people and the economy. I'd give the government an A- on this item.

Reforms for civilized, 6.5-million jobs. Actual job generation, according to official labor statistics from the NSO, has been falling far short of the 1 to 1.2 million jobs needed to employ new entrants to the labor force every year. Meanwhile, job quality continues to deteriorate, with the underemployment rate reaching as high as 26 percent, way up from the constant 14-18 percent of past years. Less than half of the new jobs being created are wage and salary jobs; the bulk have been in the form of self-employment (some unpaid workers) and unpaid family labor. Again, another F.

Decentralized development. Thus far, little indication so far that Metro Manila is being decongested, other than through piecemeal relocation of squatters. More fundamental investments like transfer of major bodies outside of Metro Manila have yet to be seen. Metro Manila real estate is highly congested, and solid waste management systems are still unable to cope with the demands of the metropolis. Still another F.

Develop Clark and Subic. The strategy to locate public investments in Clark and Subic seems premised on the cherished "trickle-down" theory of development. The main visible signs of progress here include the establishment of international flights from Clark to regional destinations like Singapore and Bangkok. We have yet to see a major scale-up in industrial activity in Clark or Subic, pending completion of the infrastructure links for telecommunications and transport. Both seaports to be hampered by lack of public investment, and lack of interest from private investors in setting up both infrastructure facilities or operations in the area. Investments here so far is next only a C-.

Averaging the above assessments, the overall outlay on the ten-point agenda falls short, unfortunately, of the minimum passing grade of 3—indicating the need for drastic improvement over the current effort on the part of the government.

Comments: cielito@yahoo.com

Gokongwei firms to raise $220M in share offering

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PROPERTY GIANT ROBINSONS Land Corp. of John Gokongwei Jr. is pushing through with its plan to raise $200-$220 million from the sale of old and new shares to foreign and local investors possibly within the year, according to sources.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange late Friday, Gokongwei's flagship JG Summit Holdings Inc., its subsidiary Universal Robina Corp. and affiliate JG Summit Capital Services said they had agreed to collectively sell portion of their holdings in RLC—about 982.8 million shares—to raise the capital.

In all, about 982.8 million shares are expected to be sold. Of the total, 787.75 percent or 982.8 million shares—are existing shares that will make up the secondary offer.

The remaining 430 million shares to be sold are new or primary.

JG Summit Group now controls about 84 percent of RLC's outstanding capital, company sources said.

After the share offer, JG Summit will retain majority ownership of the property firm but its holdings will be reduced to about 60 percent.

Of the 982.8 million secondary shares, JG Summit will account for 9.7 million shares; URC, 413.5 million shares; and JG Summit Capital, 62.6 million shares.

RLC is here on raising fresh capital rather this year as early next year to gain fresh funds for major housing projects in the consumer segment.

The price of the offer has yet to be announced.

RLC recently announced that for fiscal year 2006, its net income from October to June—the company's first three quarters—grew 20 percent to P1.23 billion from P1.02 billion in the same period last year.

The company's fiscal year ends on Sept. 30.

Total revenues for the first three quarters hit P4.85 billion. There was no comparative figure for the previous fiscal year.

RLC executive vice president Frederick D. Go said revenues largely came from the firm's commercial-centers division.

In a statement, RLC said its commercial centers division contributed almost half of the company's gross revenues.

The company's shopping centers, led by flagship stores Robinsons Galleria and Robinsons Place Manila, recorded gross revenue of P2.19 billion.

Robinsons Place Pioneer, which recently opened, and the redeveloped Robinsons Place Ermita also contributed to the overall growth. The company said the growth continues to be driven by its focus on improving tenant mix, enhancing mall facilities, and intensifying marketing efforts.

"The company will be expanding its retail presence all over the country, entering new continental markets, developing new metropolitan and provincial malls now in the pipeline, and construction will commence within 2006. We will soon complete the renovation of the Galleria Ultra Wing and are underway in the construction of the Manila mall expansion."

RLC is the real-estate arm of JG Summit Holdings Inc., one of the country's largest conglomerates with diverse interests in branded consumer foods, agro-industrial and commodity food products, textile, telecommunications, petrochemicals, air transportation and financial services.

Audit body sought for BIR, Customs

ROMBLON DEPUTY LEONARDO TEVES, newly elected chair of the House committee on ways and means, said he would push for the creation of a body that will audit the revenue collection of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs.

Teves said the creation of the body would fulfill the House committee's role in ensuring the proper collection of taxes and duties.

The congressman said there was a dire need to impose reforms in the way revenues are collected, given the huge leaks that needed to be plugged. If all potential revenues were collected, the government could easily wipe out its budget deficit, he said.

The government could then post a balance budget as early as next year, instead of the official target of 2008, Teves added.

The Department of Finance has estimated that the government loses P50-60 billion in P80 billion in potential revenues a year due to tax evasion or inefficiency in collection.

Teves said the audit body would assess the performance of revenue agencies in terms of collecting taxes and duties they ought to turn over to the state. The body would likewise be tasked to determine problems areas that are sources of revenue leaks.

The congressman also wants a revenue-forecasting body to be established to complement the functions of the proposed audit body. The revenue-forecasting body would be tasked with determining the revenue collection targets of the BIR and the BOC.

The BIR this year is tasked to collect at least P675.4 billion in taxes, an amount that is way too high, according to BIR officials.

The BOC is assigned to collect P397 billion in duties and other related taxes on oil.

The two agencies, the biggest sources of government revenues among line agencies, are hard pressed to meet their goals to help achieve the target of reducing the budget deficit to only P125 billion this year from last year's P146.8 billion.

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REP. HERMINIO TEVES

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Michelle V. Remo

Swift Foods hopes to break into $200-M Singapore market

By Christine A. Gotinga

RISE CORP.'S SUBSIDIARY SWIFT Foods Inc. is seeking accreditation to begin exporting poultry products to Singapore, a company official said.

Swift Foods will be exporting for the first time its dressed chicken products to Singapore. It is also shipping its branded products to Japan.

Both countries are still recovering from the avian flu virus, which affected their limited supply of poultry.

RISE chairman Jose "SonCos" Concepcion Jr. told the business that foreign trading firms preferred the country's poultry products.

The company is hoping to corner a portion of the $200-million market of Singapore.

"We would want to supply Singapore and see to it that we maintain this market share and [trade] side by side with other suppliers like Thailand ever when the avian flu virus is over," Concepcion said in a phone interview.

Concepcion noted that the company's chicken dressing plant in Mountain Province, is poised for export. At full capacity, the plant can actually produce 150,000 chicken heads per day.

"We could ship not less than 25 metric tons of chicken a day depending on the requirements of our customers," he said.

According to Swift Foods senior vice president Emil Aquino, processing incentives from Singapore will arrive in the country next week to begin their inspection of the company's facilities.

The company is also negotiating to ensure its poultry exports to Japan by January.

Other Philippine companies accredited to broker integration and poultry raising, such as San Miguel Corp., have begun exporting their produce to Japan early this month.

In 2004, exports of live country's consumption to Japan reached 34 million kilos, data from the Bureau of Animal Industry showed.

People, Events & Products

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Edna Arias-Espinosa

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"These two exciting lifestyle expositions are expected to attract more than 100 exhibitors from all over Asia Pacific who are interested in showcasing their products and services and are seeking partnerships in the local market," Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace H. Durano states in his endorsement letter to the tourism community.

Worldexcel's partner organizations for the twin events are the Hairdressers and Cosmetologists Association of the Philippines (Hacap), the Spa Association of the Philippines Inc (Sapi), and the Philippine Federation of Natural Health, all of which are conducting their own special events within the main show.

Members of the three industry organizations are at the forefront of today's trend in beauty and wellness, now a major attraction for global travel and tourism.

Tourists from various parts of the world now come to places that offer not only tourism destinations but more so facilities for enhancing their beauty and well being.

This phenomenon has prompted the Department of Tourism to promote the Philippines as a wellness destination in the 20 million Japanese outbound market, to whom the native hilot is fast becoming popular.

Market trends also indicate a whopping 23-percent growth rate for beauty and fitness products annually, with herbal personal care and "cosmeceuticals" alone registering $2 million in export sales.

Still, the Philippines itself is a huge market for the global beauty and wellness industry as 46 percent of the 84 million Filipinos fall within its target age segment of 44 below.

"The recent emergence of the instrumental Filipino male comedienne significantly to this dynamically growing market," said Worldexcel general manager Raquel Soriano in extending to those spending more on acquiring good health and good looks.

Moreover, the Philippines continues to be one of Asia's fastest growing markets for beauty, wellness and fitness products and services with an annual average growth rate of 20 percent," Soriano added.

Catering to the fashion-conscious Filipino nationwide are over 30,000 beauty-related establishments, which include beauty salons, health and wellness spas, fitness gyms, face and body enhancement clinics, beauty boutiques, as well as manufacturers, distributors and traders.

Fostering a local and international showcase of beauty-related products and services, the three-day expo includes professional seminars for trade practitioners and onsite demonstrations of the latest trends and technique available in this lucrative market today.

More information can be obtained from Worldexcel at 833-4562 to 65, or e-mail info@worldexco.com.

FAME celebrates 4th year

THE PRESTIGE AWARDS for Excellence and Media Supremacy (FAME) Inc., publisher of Health & Lifestyle magazine, will celebrate its 4th anniversary come September 2006.

In line with the company's anniversary celebrations, FAME Inc is offering a big discount on the subscription price of Health and Lifestyle magazine on a limited period more ongoing until Oct. 30, 2006.

Metro Manila subscribers can avail themselves the one year subscription of the magazine for only P600 from its original price of P1,200, while the subscription rate for provinces which costs P600 will be lowered to P400. For provincial subscribers, the cashier price of P1,300 is slashed to P800 for one-year subscription, while a six-month subscription is at P500.

Interested parties may call Rudy Resurreccion at 892-0725 or 24. Subscription may be effected via cheque or cash. Or deposit the amount to BPI Bank branches with savings account number 0051-1826-69. The deposit slip should be faxed at 892-8151.

Santa Isabel College HS reunion

ALL ALUMNI OF SANTA ISABEL COLLEGE High School batch 1966 are invited to return to campus for their 2006 homecoming and to celebrate the 111th founding anniversary of their alma mater. Entering the administration building of the Hand of Santa Cruz on Sep. 14 will be alumni Rhea at 8 a.m., or be highlighted with the homecoming reunion on Sep. 17 with this year's golden jubilee have the high school graduates of batch '56. For more details, call Sis. Isabel Gonzaga, Office of Alumni Affairs at 403-9418 up to 28, or Jose Garcia at 649-1481, Billy Garcia at 416-8673, 0907-819-2988, or e-mail betchan2000@yahoo.com.

RP TOPS 5TH PHILIPPINE INTERNATIONAL BILLFISH TOURNAMENT

The title is right within reach for Philippine anglers at the 5th Philippine International Billfish Tournament (PIBT) at the nation's sailfish capital in San Vicente, Tagaytay Province. The members of Pinoy Teams of Philippine Airlines and Sony Legaspi of Manila Commercial finally wrested the 5th away from visiting anglers in a down-the-wire finish after four years of fruitless campaigning with foreigners from Hong Kong and Taiwan. 21 anglers from 6 countries Taiwan, Australia, the United States of America, Malaysia, Singapore and the hosts fishing catapults of the Philippine Game Fishing Association at the Boat Basin in Barangay Montemar Fishing Camp and hauled in 26 billfish strain caught by the Team's Vitmar Siam May 28 to 31. Rounding up the winners on the 5th PIBT were Tino Gozon and Tony Fajardo (champions), Ohsang, Shi-Ming and Lin, Kuan-Hung (1st runner up), and Frank Kuan and Chen, Yao-Chen (3rd runner up). Meanwhile, Joe Tojok V. Ollit for Inland Sportfishing Tournament winners are Vico Gozon and Tony Fajardo (champions), Edwin Quizon (1st runner up), and Bobby Gozon and Ilar Tagaig (3rd runner up). For more information on the tournament, call Atty. Gerardo Ice, Philippine Game Fishing Foundation, at 402-7117 loc. 330.

PCTO, Itesap endorse Commweb 2006

THE PHILIPPINE CHAMBER OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS Operators (PCTO), with its members Bayantel, Capitol Wireless Inc, Digital, Extelcom, Express Telecom, Globe Telecom, Innove, Globe Telecom, Isla Communications Inc, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, Philippine Telegraph & Telephone Corp., Pilipinas Telephone Corp., Smart Communications Inc and Telecommunications Technologies Philippines Inc, has thrown its support at Commweb '06 to be held from Aug. 8 to 12 at the World Trade Center Metro Manila. It is also being supported by the Integrated Telecommunication Suppliers Association of the Philippines (Itesap) and will serve as a major platform for industry leaders to promote, discuss and make both local and foreign investments to enter the fast expanding Philippine ICT market. Commweb '06 is being organized by Global Link Marketing & Management Services Inc (GLMM). For more information, call Engr. Lagandaon at 750-8989/891-1894, loc. 160-8080 or e-mail Engr. lagan@globallinkph.com.

ProductFILES

Color it black

THE WORLD'S BESTSELLING portable music system that changed the way people listen to music just got better. Once available only in white, audio enthusiasts will be thrilled to see the Wave Sound Dock in a different color line, glossy black.

Launched only this year, the Bose Wave Sound Dock edition is the compact powered acoustic package with an all-new look. It has a crisp and-size

control panel which enables you to control the system from across the room. A docking cradle for the iPod allows you to enjoy your music while conveniently charging your iPod without the cables or adapters. Simply insert the iPod into the cradle and experience clear, crisp and uncluttered sound of Bose audio technology even at high volumes. The SoundDock system's sleek appearance blends with the iPod and almost any décor. Its slim profile and small footprint allow placement in kitchens, bedrooms, offices, dorm rooms and even at the beach while having fun in the sun.

The SoundDock is the only system in the market with the patented Active Electronic Equalization and Digital Signal Processing (EQ/DSP) that maintains the output of the speakers, therefore providing a natural balance and clarity throughout the audio spectrum.

"The SoundDock system enhances the performance of both the iPod and the Bose iPod. Music lovers will surely be impressed by the quality of sound provided by such a small package," states Pillsan Ho, president and GM of Elektra Marketing Corp., exclusive distributors of Bose entertainment systems.

The new Sound Dock Black edition is available in audio centers and appliance centers nationwide. For inquiries on how to experience a new level of Digital music, call 724-9500/808-2068 or log on to www.elektra.com.ph and visit Bose showrooms at the SM Megamall, Howard Plaza Mall in Rockwell Center, 2/F Robinsons Ermita, 3rd floor of Glorietta 3, Ayala Center, Makati, Alabang Town Center and soon to open at the SM Mall of Asia.

Bayview Park Hotel plans your wedding

BAYVIEW PARK HOTEL'S "WEDDING Planning Day" is still capturing the bridal market by storm. Soon-to-be-wed couples are encouraged to join the fun-filled and exciting one-day function and have the detailed discussions with top-caliber wedding suppliers, entertainment and premier designers to make and plan your wedding. It's open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., with free admission.

Participating suppliers are Beach Petals (the Florist), Bags Party Shop, Liberto Villareal & Photography, Norberto Esparcia, Executive Secretary of Cakes by Cecilia, Regent Travel Corp., My Wedding Notebook Class, Kand-com, The Wedding Library, Del Sounds & Lights, and Ruskal Fe-Easy Plans.

On Sep. 2, a grandiose fashion show will be unveiled. Dubbed "Fantasy Wedding", creations of elegance gowns by Joel Pere and Boy-ing Concepcion will be showcased. This event is also free to the public.

For any inquiries and information, call 526-1555 or 526-1538, or e-mail bayviewpark@bayviewparkhotel.com.

Bayview is located at 1118 Roxas Boulevard corner UN Avenue, Manila (Opening the UN Embassy).

Festival Supermall fairs

WATCH OUT FOR THE UNBELIEVABLE at the most sophisticated gadgets and high-tech accessories from different electronics and computer shops during their home and fashion fair (2006 at the Festival Supermall, Howard Plaza Mall in Rockwell Center, 2/F Robinsons Ermita, 3rd floor of Glorietta 3, Ayala Center, Makati, Alabang Town Center and soon to open at the SM Mall of Asia.

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Now on its third year, Beauty & Fitness World is the country's pioneering and only international tradefair for the cosmetics, personal care, spa and fitness industries. It will be held back-to-back with the launching of Spa & Wellness Philippines 2006, an expo within an expo, according to Worldexcel.

"These two exciting lifestyle expositions are expected to attract more than 100 exhibitors from all over Asia Pacific who are interested in showcasing their products and services and are seeking partnerships in the local market," Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace H. Durano states in his endorsement letter to the tourism community.

Worldexcel's partner organizations for the twin events are the Hairdressers and Cosmetologists Association of the Philippines (Hacap), the Spa Association of the Philippines Inc (Sapi), and the Philippine Federation of Natural Health, all of which are conducting their own special events within the main show.

Members of the three industry organizations are at the forefront of today's trend in beauty and wellness, now a major attraction for global travel and tourism.

Tourists from various parts of the world now come to places that offer not only tourism destinations but more so facilities for enhancing their beauty and well being.

This phenomenon has prompted the Department of Tourism to promote the Philippines as a wellness destination in the 20 million Japanese outbound market, to whom the native hilot is fast becoming popular.

Market trends also indicate a whopping 23-percent growth rate for beauty and fitness products annually, with herbal personal care and "cosmeceuticals" alone registering $2 million in export sales.

Still, the Philippines itself is a huge market for the global beauty and wellness industry as 46 percent of the 84 million Filipinos fall within its target age segment of 44 below.

"The recent emergence of the instrumental Filipino male comedienne significantly to this dynamically growing market," said Worldexcel general manager Raquel Soriano in extending to those spending more on acquiring good health and good looks.

Moreover, the Philippines continues to be one of Asia's fastest growing markets for beauty, wellness and fitness products and services with an annual average growth rate of 20 percent," Soriano added.

Catering to the fashion-conscious Filipino nationwide are over 30,000 beauty-related establishments, which include beauty salons, health and wellness spas, fitness gyms, face and body enhancement clinics, beauty boutiques, as well as manufacturers, distributors and traders.

Fostering a local and international showcase of beauty-related products and services, the three-day expo includes professional seminars for trade practitioners and onsite demonstrations of the latest trends and technique available in this lucrative market today.

More information can be obtained from Worldexcel at 833-4562 to 65, or e-mail info@worldexco.com.

FAME celebrates 4th year

THE PRESTIGE AWARDS for Excellence and Media Supremacy (FAME) Inc., publisher of Health & Lifestyle magazine, will celebrate its 4th anniversary come September 2006.

In line with the company's anniversary celebrations, FAME Inc is offering a big discount on the subscription price of Health and Lifestyle magazine on a limited period more ongoing until Oct. 30, 2006.

Metro Manila subscribers can avail themselves the one year subscription of the magazine for only P600 from its original price of P1,200, while the subscription rate for provinces which costs P600 will be lowered to P400. For provincial subscribers, the cashier price of P1,300 is slashed to P800 for one-year subscription, while a six-month subscription is at P500.

Interested parties may call Rudy Resurreccion at 892-0725 or 24. Subscription may be effected via cheque or cash. Or deposit the amount to BPI Bank branches with savings account number 0051-1826-69. The deposit slip should be faxed at 892-8151.

Santa Isabel College HS reunion

ALL ALUMNI OF SANTA ISABEL COLLEGE High School batch 1966 are invited to return to campus for their 2006 homecoming and to celebrate the 111th founding anniversary of their alma mater. Entering the administration building of the Hand of Santa Cruz on Sep. 14 will be alumni Rhea at 8 a.m., or be highlighted with the homecoming reunion on Sep. 17 with this year's golden jubilee have the high school graduates of batch '56. For more details, call Sis. Isabel Gonzaga, Office of Alumni Affairs at 403-9418 up to 28, or Jose Garcia at 649-1481, Billy Garcia at 416-8673, 0907-819-2988, or e-mail betchan2000@yahoo.com.

RP TOPS 5TH PHILIPPINE INTERNATIONAL BILLFISH TOURNAMENT

The title is right within reach for Philippine anglers at the 5th Philippine International Billfish Tournament (PIBT) at the nation's sailfish capital in San Vicente, Tagaytay Province. The members of Pinoy Teams of Philippine Airlines and Sony Legaspi of Manila Commercial finally wrested the 5th away from visiting anglers in a down-the-wire finish after four years of fruitless campaigning with foreigners from Hong Kong and Taiwan. 21 anglers from 6 countries Taiwan, Australia, the United States of America, Malaysia, Singapore and the hosts fishing catapults of the Philippine Game Fishing Association at the Boat Basin in Barangay Montemar Fishing Camp and hauled in 26 billfish strain caught by the Team's Vitmar Siam May 28 to 31. Rounding up the winners on the 5th PIBT were Tino Gozon and Tony Fajardo (champions), Ohsang, Shi-Ming and Lin, Kuan-Hung (1st runner up), and Frank Kuan and Chen, Yao-Chen (3rd runner up). Meanwhile, Joe Tojok V. Ollit for Inland Sportfishing Tournament winners are Vico Gozon and Tony Fajardo (champions), Edwin Quizon (1st runner up), and Bobby Gozon and Ilar Tagaig (3rd runner up). For more information on the tournament, call Atty. Gerardo Ice, Philippine Game Fishing Foundation, at 402-7117 loc. 330.

PCTO, Itesap endorse Commweb 2006

THE PHILIPPINE CHAMBER OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS Operators (PCTO), with its members Bayantel, Capitol Wireless Inc, Digital, Extelcom, Express Telecom, Globe Telecom, Innove, Globe Telecom, Isla Communications Inc, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, Philippine Telegraph & Telephone Corp., Pilipinas Telephone Corp., Smart Communications Inc and Telecommunications Technologies Philippines Inc, has thrown its support at Commweb '06 to be held from Aug. 8 to 12 at the World Trade Center Metro Manila. It is also being supported by the Integrated Telecommunication Suppliers Association of the Philippines (Itesap) and will serve as a major platform for industry leaders to promote, discuss and make both local and foreign investments to enter the fast expanding Philippine ICT market. Commweb '06 is being organized by Global Link Marketing & Management Services Inc (GLMM). For more information, call Engr. Lagandaon at 750-8989/891-1894, loc. 160-8080 or e-mail Engr. lagan@globallinkph.com.

ProductFILES

Color it black

THE WORLD'S BESTSELLING portable music system that changed the way people listen to music just got better. Once available only in white, audio enthusiasts will be thrilled to see the Wave Sound Dock in a different color line, glossy black.

Launched only this year, the Bose Wave Sound Dock edition is the compact powered acoustic package with an all-new look. It has a crisp and-size

control panel which enables you to control the system from across the room. A docking cradle for the iPod allows you to enjoy your music while conveniently charging your iPod without the cables or adapters. Simply insert the iPod into the cradle and experience clear, crisp and uncluttered sound of Bose audio technology even at high volumes. The SoundDock system's sleek appearance blends with the iPod and almost any décor. Its slim profile and small footprint allow placement in kitchens, bedrooms, offices, dorm rooms and even at the beach while having fun in the sun.

The SoundDock is the only system in the market with the patented Active Electronic Equalization and Digital Signal Processing (EQ/DSP) that maintains the output of the speakers, therefore providing a natural balance and clarity throughout the audio spectrum.

"The SoundDock system enhances the performance of both the iPod and the Bose iPod. Music lovers will surely be impressed by the quality of sound provided by such a small package," states Pillsan Ho, president and GM of Elektra Marketing Corp., exclusive distributors of Bose entertainment systems.

The new Sound Dock Black edition is available in audio centers and appliance centers nationwide. For inquiries on how to experience a new level of Digital music, call 724-9500/808-2068 or log on to www.elektra.com.ph and visit Bose showrooms at the SM Megamall, Howard Plaza Mall in Rockwell Center, 2/F Robinsons Ermita, 3rd floor of Glorietta 3, Ayala Center, Makati, Alabang Town Center and soon to open at the SM Mall of Asia.

Bayview Park Hotel plans your wedding

BAYVIEW PARK HOTEL'S "WEDDING Planning Day" is still capturing the bridal market by storm. Soon-to-be-wed couples are encouraged to join the fun-filled and exciting one-day function and have the detailed discussions with top-caliber wedding suppliers, entertainment and premier designers to make and plan your wedding. It's open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., with free admission.

Participating suppliers are Beach Petals (the Florist), Bags Party Shop, Liberto Villareal & Photography, Norberto Esparcia, Executive Secretary of Cakes by Cecilia, Regent Travel Corp., My Wedding Notebook Class, Kand-com, The Wedding Library, Del Sounds & Lights, and Ruskal Fe-Easy Plans.

On Sep. 2, a grandiose fashion show will be unveiled. Dubbed "Fantasy Wedding", creations of elegance gowns by Joel Pere and Boy-ing Concepcion will be showcased. This event is also free to the public.

For any inquiries and information, call 526-1555 or 526-1538, or e-mail bayviewpark@bayviewparkhotel.com.

Bayview is located at 1118 Roxas Boulevard corner UN Avenue, Manila (Opening the UN Embassy).

Festival Supermall fairs

WATCH OUT FOR THE UNBELIEVABLE at the most sophisticated gadgets and high-tech accessories from different electronics and computer shops during their home and fashion fair (2006 at the Festival Supermall, Howard Plaza Mall in Rockwell Center, 2/F Robinsons Ermita, 3rd floor of Glorietta 3, Ayala Center, Makati, Alabang Town Center and soon to open at the SM Mall of Asia.

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Banks seen capturing more OFW remittances

Share to hit 11% in '06

By Dan C. Dantes

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS EXpects accelerated growth in the banking system's share of remittances sent by overseas Filipino workers from 10 percent to 11 percent.

In a report presented last week to the government's Cabinet-level Development Budget Coordination Committee, the BSP said it was more bullish on the influx of OFW remittances over the eight banks despite the projected moderate 6.5 percent growth in global remittances.

Explaining the upgraded forecast, BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said on Friday: "For the first six months, we've had 13 percent (growth) and at the same time, we continue to see the improving efforts by the banks to sign up these remittances."

"Secondly, our country is not an impoverished country. We have a lot of workers (who are) professionals, more highly skilled workers," he added.

The upgraded growth forecast, however, was small compared to the 28 percent increase in OFW inflows in 2005, when remittances hit a record high of $13.7 billion.

"We recognize that 2005 was high, and growth is not necessarily easy to sustain at 28 percent growth (in the years ahead), but this won't be as high as what we've seen in early 2006," BSP did not immediately hear said.

But Steel said Philippine banks had made significant progress in attracting remittances previously routed through informal channels, cash in friends, acquaintances or other travelers.

"Our banking channels here are very secure. Not only do they establish their presence in places where we have a large deployment of Filipinos, in places where they don't have a presence, they establish it to say," Steel said.

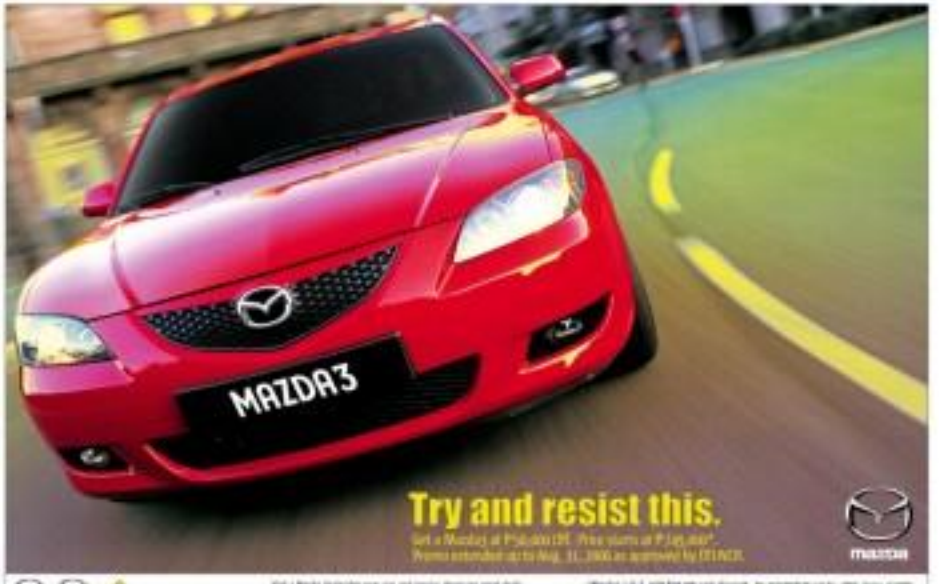
Compared to the profile of Filipinos moving for abroad five to 10 years ago consisting mostly of unskilled workers, the mid-term professionals going abroad were able to send double or triple the average remittances in the past.

The BSP took special note of wire-based remittances, who account for 25 percent of labor remittances.

"I highlight this group of our hard workers simply because this group of workers covers those who apply the 80-20 percent rule on remittances," Steel said.

The BSP has been encouraging OFWs to send money through the banks in a way a rules allow unless and can help develop better savings habits among OFWs.

For the legislators, better monitoring mechanisms and understanding of these inflows help craft better policies.



MONDAY
AUGUST 1, 2005

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

B7&8

BUSINESS Monday

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

Worry-free

Car Fleet Lease

CITIC

Would you give your profits to the poor?

Paradigm asks businesses how much earnings they want, then share the rest

OVER 100 DELEGATES FROM several countries recently went to the Philippines to talk about an economic program where profits of an enterprise will go to the poor.

The Congress on the Economy of Communion was held in the 90-cyclone Metropolis Peace Center in Tagaytay. It was participated by delegates from the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Myanmar, France and Switzerland.

The Economy of Communion or EoC is a new economic paradigm that encourages individuals and groups to set up enterprises where profits will go to answer the needs of the poor members of the community. It is being offered in Filipino entrepreneurs as a way to alleviate poverty and bridge the wealth gap that is often the root of discord and tension in society.

EoC is now practiced by over 750 successful companies in over 30 countries. It provides the businessmen the freedom to determine the amount of profit that he wants to make, his return on his investment and the dividends that the company's stockholders want to declare.

The residual profit is then divided into three parts—not necessarily in equal amounts...intended for reinvestment in the company (capital equipment, expansion program and so forth); for the poor (to begin with the workless and extend to adopted communities); and for the formation of man (to expand the coverage of the EoC).

Luigino Bruni, professor of economics at the University of Milan and member of the international commission of the EoC in Rome, opened the congress with a narration of the evolution of the EoC.

He traced the developments of the EoC from the Benedictine monks' integration of work and prayer (6th to 12th century), the establishment of Franciscan banks, the first microfinance institutions to "cure poverty" (18th century), Gandhi's salt march in 1930, to 1991, the launching of the EoC.

Lec Andringa, former regional director of Central Bank of the Netherlands, clarified that "The main motivation for an EoC enterprise exceeds the growth of capital and profit to one of sensing the sense of community in a commercial environment." He also identified the model of a future business organization that veers away from the present Anglo-Saxon hierarchical set-up.

The congress presented four business enterprises as models: A bakery in South Korea which employs 140; a management consulting firm in Manila with 500 client companies and 55 owned.

WINAIS BULL

Ex-officio director

THE APPOINTMENT OF EX-OFficio directors in the governing boards of corporations is slowly becoming a practice in the local business scene.

If you take a close look at the annual reports of the top 50 companies in the country, you will see the names of ex-officio directors included in the roster of the regular members of the board of directors.

Ex-officio (a Latin phrase which means "by virtue of the office") directors are persons who become members of the board without the benefit of an election by the stockholders.

The title is, therefore, obtained by choice by the stockholders from their ranks during the annual stockholders' meeting.

Also referred to in the business circles as "honorary directors," ex-officio directors are given that title as a matter of accommodation, not by virtue of a right under existing laws.

The manner of choosing ex-officio directors is left to the discretion of the stockholders.

While some corporations make provision for the selection of ex-officio directors in their Articles of Incorporation or by-laws, others go through it on an ad-hoc accommodation.

Recognition

On ceremonial occasions, some stock corporations include the names of ex-officio directors in the list of directors to be elected/re-elected.

In other companies, the authority to designate honorary directorships is delegated to the board of directors.

In what may be considered a carryover of the traditional Filipino respect for elders, the position of ex-officio director is usually given to the founders or pioneers of the corporation who have retired from active participation in the business.

The position is also used as a means of rewarding employees who gave the best years of their lives in the company and who are still mentally and physically alert.

Their experience and expertise come in handy to management's formulation of business policies and projects.

Also, some companies invite prominent businessmen as social personalities to their board through the ex-officio route to give more prestige to their line-up of directors.

And what better way to solve the heated egos of stockholders who cannot be accommodated in the board room through the regular way than to designate them as ex-officio directors.

Officers

The legality of creating the position of ex-officio director in private corporations has been the subject of numerous queries to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The request for clarification is understandable because outside of the directors, the Corporation Code mentions only the president, treasurer and secretary as the officers of a corporation.

The consideration, however, does not prevent the stockholders from including in their Articles of Incorporation or by-laws other positions with officer status that, in their judgment, will help the company accomplish its corporate objectives.

But with regard to directors, the Corporation Code is firm and unequivocal. They must be elected by the stockholders.

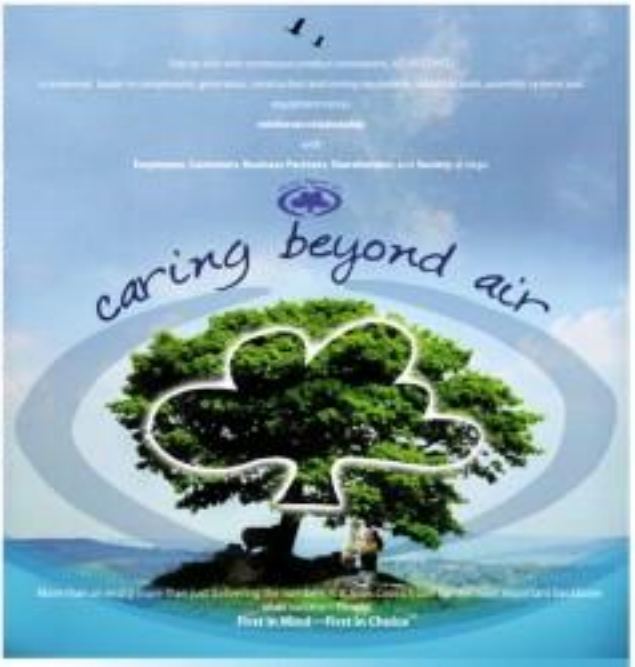
The minimum qualification for election to that post is ownership of at least one share of stock.

And once elected, directors shall hold office for one year and until their successors are elected and qualified.

The law requires directors to get true members because, acting as a body, they have the authority to exercise all corporate powers, conduct the business of the cor-

EX-OFFICIO BULL

corporate securities info
Raoul J. Fabiliforce



Regional Strength, Asian Warmth

• Over $50 billion in group assets
• Bank of the Year in Malaysia (The Banker Award, 2004)
• Among the top banks in the world
• One of Asia's Best Banks

Maybank

The continuing quest for innovative strategies—I

LAST LAST YEAR, SEBOUS owners were the subway of the country's biggest pre-need company hit the headlines. With the future education and pension funds of hundreds of thousands of our countrymen at stake, the ensuing public outcry started to snowball. The situation exacerbated when the failure of several other pre-need companies became media. By the middle of the year, public confidence in the whole industry had eroded, that industry subscribed 52 percent.

The response of surviving pre-need companies at that time was rather predictable. A lot of money was spent on PR and advertising that highlighted the financial strength of those companies that survived. The thinking was that a "flight to quality" statement would obviously be right for the post-mortem that the crisis presented.

What Sun Life did was quite out of the box. Instead of mounting a "me too" ad campaign, we decided to push strategy with a direct-to-market approach. We took the major malls of Metro Manila and key provincial cities. The process was called "Tune In to Your Future" and it involved researching people for long-term saving. It was based for the last three months of the year—leading up to the Christmas season—and the creative handle used for the mall tour was something we would not readily associate with a respectable-mood company.

We called the campaign more of creating a blue tune if you will, nice entirely a blue sound. This value innovation (hereafter interpreted both our cost structure and lifted the value proposition of our buyers. Cost savings achieved, and our buying public liked the offering. Over time, we believe that cost will go further down because of the scale economies from the high sales volume generated.

The results were nothing less than astounding. In the first month of the campaign alone, Sun Life Pinas sold more than in the previous six months combined. By the end of the three-month campaign, the company was able to turn around its sales performance to a growth of 117 percent year-on-year. The whole pre-need industry, on the other hand, ended last year with a negative growth of 52 percent. From it's ranking of No. 5 in the industry in 2004, Sun Life's per-need unit ended 2005 as No. 1.

While I am sure many of you would want to know more about the details of that successful campaign, I think that the bigger question for us, in light of our topic this morning, is this: How can a company like Sun Life, which has been around for more than a century, still act as nimbly as a responding to market events and to spotting and seizing opportunities as these arise?

This is the lens-work by which I would like to approach the subject of strategic innovation. I would like to examine the concepts of strategy and innovation within the broader context of organizational change.

In fact, allow me to be honest enough to talk about innovation and innovative change as we observe these in nature and in the world of man. I find Charles Darwin, the selfsame principles as applied to business, fearless, after all, is part of and does not operate independently of the universe.

Life developed on Earth only 500 million years after the Earth became stable and cool enough. The process of biological evolution was very close at first. It took two-and-a-half billion years before the sea-line cells to multi-cell animals, and another billion years to evolve through fish and reptiles to mammals.

The slow, sensitive start is characteristic of the initial phases of growth in the business context. But is the start-up phase, which is characterized by a long period of exploring and investing, a process of success. It is a phase that involves a great deal of risk-taking, high adaptability and entrepreneurship.

This is typical in the start-up years of many business organizations, and it was certainly the case with Sun Life Financial in the Philippines. Sun Life has been in the Philippines for 111 years. We are the first and oldest life insurance company in the country.

It began in 1891 when Sun Life's president at that time, J.B. Macaulay, sailed in the Sharpe, the company's first global setting-up and sold him, "We believe there is a field for life insurance in the Far East, but we don't know for sure ... We want you to go and find out."

And so the good soldier that he was, Macaulay found himself in the Imperial China, in a long and arduous sea journey that would take him from Vancouver to Yokohama, then Nagasaki, then Shanghai, then Hong Kong, and finally the Philippines.

In the written account of J.C. White, Sun Life's inspector of agencies who came to Manila for a visit in 1898, on the endless prairies of the hinterland in the Philippines reveals the mammoth task of informing and educating people about the principles and merits of life assurance. The suspicion and prejudice, which he noted and which he and his agents had to overcome, were formidable, could have stemmed from old and misguided notion that taking out an insurance on one's life or on the life of another was a material gamble.

There was literally growth and prosperity by leaps for those two pioneering operations until the outset of World War II. As a foreign company, our operations were closed by the Japanese occupation forces. In the late '40s, even though we were 50 years old then in the country, our business was starting as general re-entry.

It was only when we were well in the 1980s that Sun Life underwent what may as well be our second phase of growth. It was already a maturing and improving on this success.

In business, companies who find themselves in this second phase experience explosive growth to a relatively short period of time. Sun Life, for instance, had the best rates of binary and Globe, and the 100 mills, etc. that very well illustrate this point. It's the point of critical mass for a successful start-up; the turning point—or as it is vogue these days, the tipping point of business.

For Sun Life Philippines, our tipping point happened when we were able to develop and leverage a small but highly effective world-class agency and a customer agency system to reach, to target a highly lucrative market segment: the AB segment, in particular, the affluent Chinese in the country.

In 1995, we came in our own and business were fully dissolved to us from Toronto. Many in business Sun Life's Asia Pacific regional headquarters processing both Philippines and Hong Kong transactions.

Manila was the choice not only because of its central location in Southeast Asia, but also because it was the largest component of our business in the region and had an excellent labor force and reasonable operating costs. In so many words, we're really a teenager who happened to be 107 years old at that time!

After a period of high growth that culminated in our second, breaking sales performance in the year 2000, we launched our companies in 12 months: the Sun Life Asset Management Co. in 2000 and the Sun Life Financial Plans Inc in 2001.

Our vision then was to transform Sun Life from a single-line life insurance company to a multi-line financial services company. With the two companies in place, we were very more formidable, ready to help secure the financial future of our customers.

It is due to the second phase of growth when a company has the ability to offer larger systems, rules and procedures are created and formalized to ensure that "things are done right." This is the stage where hierarchy and bureaucracy establish themselves in the organization. In a certain point during a period of high growth, control and organizational consistency become critically important for the organization as it moves forward. Thus, many companies in phase 2 pursue total quality management, continuous improvement, business process reengineering and such other initiatives toward that end.

We, at Sun Life found ourselves in the very same situation ourselves. We decided to launch a business process reengineering program. As arranged, if one were thought of BPR as an innovation strategy, we couldn't have been more wrong. After all, our days are gone by the hiding.

System-quite a number of companies do think of BPR and TQM as strategic innovation initiatives. It's an erroneous assumption and leads to risky quality improvement, which is necessary for ensuring product or service consistency, is rarely effective as a competitive strategy by itself. I always tell people that if their boat is not going in the right direction, stopping, or even that they intend to do it better, then they really do not have a strategy.

One cannot challenge a top company simply on the basis of better quality, in that level, all the top companies in the category are guaranteed to have good quality. And in fact, many consumers already think that the No. 2 beauties. Because it has the best quality. Convincing them otherwise is going to be like pushing mouth water. Sun Life, for example, BPR initiative gave us a better registry in the game. Obtaining the game is an altogether different matter.

(The author is chair of Sun Life Financial Phils. This article is based on her keynote at a recent BMAP forum. Feedback at mpaco@pinoy.com.ph)

Free training for coffee farmers

FOR MORE THAN 12 YEARS NOW, the Senior Supervisor and Development Team (SSDT) in Tagum City, Davao, has been giving free technical training to coffee farmers, technicians and agriculture students.

"What we do is extend technical assistance to the farmers and to some extent put up demonstration farms where we provide inputs while the farmers provide the labor in equity," reveals Zaiton Ampatuan, resident agronomist for MEDP "the introduce Nescafé technology in them."

According to Ampatuan, the MEDP has trained 10,000 farmers, technicians and agricultural students—a fifth of the country's current total number of coffee farmers.

Training, which ranges from three days to two weeks, covers the latest in coffee production technology because new varieties, management, planting and cultivation, harvesting, processing and even marketing of green coffee beans are conducted for free. MEDP even covers the farmers' board and lodging during the training.

All the coffee farmers have to do is go to MEDP. If this is not possible, Nestlé field technical department made use of

its four agronomists to conduct on-site training anywhere in the Philippines.

Ahmad said that by introducing the farmers to proven agricultural methods and new technologies, they can dramatically increase the quality and quantity of their harvest. "We usually need to encourage right coffee farming and that begins with proper planting."

And not to mention good planting materials.

MEDP helps propagate high-quality and high-yielding Robusta planting materials by selling it at cost price. In the last five years, MEDP had distributed a substantial number of coffee seeds, coffee seedlings, and cuttings. The planting materials are estimated to cover over 8,700 hectares of coffee plantation generating an estimated 20,000 direct jobs.

In his recent agricultural report, Ahmad is optimistic that most of the country's 70,000 hectare coffee plantations need rehabilitation and rejuvenation. Despite this, Ahmad reveals that harvesting and processing have generally improved with many farmers delivering grade 1 to grade 2 beans.

"It's not difficult for our farmers to double their yield," Ahmad confirmed. "All they have to do is to plant good planting materials, put the right kind and amount of fertilizers in their coffee farms and maintain them properly."

For inquiries on MEDP and its training programs, call 8980005.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD: Outgoing Procter & Gamble Philippines president and general manager Jaleip C. Cua (left) passes on the symbolic key to his successor, James M. Lafferty (right), in a simple turnover rite recently. Looking on is Deb Hemmeta, president of P&G Asian Accessories India (AAI) Market Development Organization. Hemmeta, in her talk, cited Cua's distinguished leadership during which P&GP had created about 13,000 more jobs.

Ex-officio director

From page B1-1

position and current all its properties.

In a liberal interpretation of the law, the SEC has ruled that corporations can provide in their by-laws the appointment of ex-officio directors, but subject to the express condition that they shall have no voting rights.

Only the duly elected directors can vote on corporate actions submitted for the consideration of the board.

The honorary directors will be limited to the role of acting as advisers to the regular members of the board.

The corollary effect of this restriction is, the presence or absence of ex-officio directors will not be material in determining the existence of a quorum in board meetings.

Of course, nothing can stop the corporation from making it in by-laws that no board meeting shall commence unless an ex-officio director is present.

At the end of the day, however, it is the core of the regular directors that will decide. And for which they can be held accountable by the stockholders and the law.

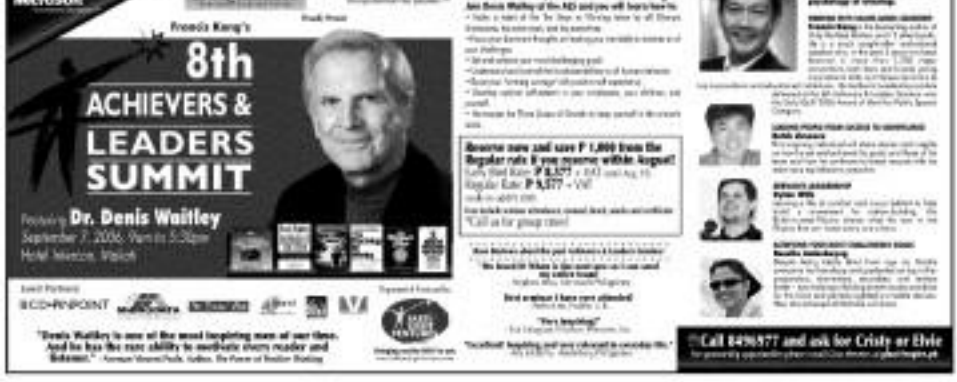
That's what makes the position of ex-officio directors enviable. They can enjoy the perks and privileges of the office without the corresponding liabilities. (Feedback at rjaldon@inquirer.com.ph)

Would you give your profits to the poor?

From page B2-1

nanny, a manufacturing firm in Mumbai making original Italian pasta (no swear) and a small merchandise store in Las Piñas selling school supplies to students.

All businesses—regardless of size—are marked by a harmonious and productive relationship between and among employees and managers and offer their profits for the benefit of the needy.



Travel solution firm gains Peza accreditation

TEXTEK DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS, a new US-based Listed technology corporation specialized in distribution technology for travel and tourism industry needs, has entered the Philippines with an accreditation from the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza), spearheading its efforts of establishing the country as its major operations hub in Asia.

The Peza accreditation will allow Textek to enjoy fiscal and non-fiscal incentives under the RA 7916, as part of the national development strategy formulated to boost entry of foreign investments with environment-friendly economic zones all over the country to respond to demands for ready-to-occupy locations for foreign companies.

Textek's VP for Operations Terry Barry said the firm has already attracted over 100 travel agencies.

For more info visit www.textekusa.com. Or call 8915885-86.

BUSINESS Monday

The Crucible—Part 2

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

IN THE SPRING OF 1964, 102-year-old Mandela arrived on Robben Island where he would spend 18 of his 27 prison years. Confined to a small cell, the Boer lion had a backyard for a toilet, he was forced to do hard labor in a quarry. He was allowed one visitor a year for 30 minutes. He could write and receive one letter every six months.

But Robben Island became the crucible which transformed him.

Through his intelligence, charm and dignified defiance, Mandela eventually lost even the most brutal prison officials of his will, attained leadership over his jailed comrades and became the master of his own prison.

He emerged from it the mature leader who would fight and win the great political battles that would create a new democratic South Africa. ("The Long Walk of Nelson Mandela," Inquirer)

Nelson Mandela used his powerful character and imagination to choose his jailer's attempt to dehumanize him. "If I had not been in prison," he told Oprah in an interview in 2001, "I would not have been able to achieve the most difficult task in life, and that is changing myself."

Mandela didn't see himself as a passive victim, someone who was imprisoned by others, just as an individual who had been "in prison." Instead of allowing his jailers to define him, Mandela fashioned a heroic identity for himself, one that inspired millions in SA-ica and also around the world.

What qualities allow a leader to prevail, just as Mandela did, in the toughest crucibles?

Perspective. People who successfully go through a crucible as leaders have the right perspective—the ability to see the bigger picture within the heat of the moment.

Leaders have the ability to look beyond the problems. On arrest, on the dark hour to find the will and compassion to overcome the situation. They see opportunity in the obstacles. As author Robert Clinton said, "The primary difference between a follower and a leader is perspective."

In my book "Winning With People," one of the people principles is the Big Picture Principle. It's a picture to help people see past their selfishness and to recognize a greater reality than themselves. After all, the entire population of the world, with one minor exception, is composed of others.

Faith. Faith is another essential quality of people who persevere through the crucibles of life. Such is the belief that something better is ahead. In the words of Mother Theresa, "Faith keeps the people who keep the faith."

Nelson Mandela held on through 27 years of brutal imprisonment because he had an unwavering faith that his suffering would ultimately contribute to freedom and justice in South Africa. His faith generated hope, and hope gave him the optimism that his situations would change and would change.

For many leaders like Mandela, faith was the only thing remaining there through the crucible and the one thing allowing them to hold on to hope.

Adaptive Capacity—the knack to understand events and adjust one's course.

A leader with adaptive capacity possesses an awareness of the surroundings. Such a leader has an intuition that senses the needs of the moment and prioritizes them over personal comforts. In the moment, the leader adapts and adjusts to help others and themselves through the moment.

They have the capacity to work more to the demands of their circumstances. Carl Sandy says it this way: "The secret of a leader lies in the roots he has fixed over the whole course of his life and the habit of action he develops in meeting them now."

Not final sentences in crucibles. The first crucible is the toughest, since you don't have past experience or a prior victory to look back upon.

Sensing crucibles get more difficult if they are handled incorrectly. When we do not allow the crucible person to have its way with us, if we quit or bail out, it becomes more difficult for the next time around.

Crucibles require patience, perspective, and reflection. They never leave us the same.

Successfully conquering a crucible allows us to help others, which I think is my desire for this edition of LPL. If you and I can go through our crucibles as leaders, we gain great confidence and can pass that confidence on to others in the midst of the crucible experience.

(For information on John Maxwell's in-house or public leadership or teamwork workshops, please send us a message/inquiry@ph or call 813-2732/63 Tina MAXWELL ON 0-4632 (Smart) to get daily SMS leadership insights from John Maxwell.)

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NOBEL LAUREATE VISITS MANILA. Daniel Kahneman (3rd from left), Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences 2002 flew to Manila to attend a reception dinner held in his honor at the Ayala Museum by Guggenheim Partners. With him are (from left) Richard Po Sr., Washington SyCip, Finance Secretary Margarita Teves, Andrew Rosenfield and Chris Po. Manila was one of three cities Kahneman included on his working Asian Tour. The other two being Hong Kong and Singapore where he met with Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew. Kahneman received the Nobel Prize for his work in Behavioral Finance. Behavioral Finance marries psychology and classical economics to better understand investor behavior.

Buy Pinoy, save jobs

EARLY CHRISTMAS SHOPPERS WILL BE treated to top quality export products from over 200 manufacturers of holiday decors, housewares, fashion accessories, furniture, furnishings and food when they visit two major fairs this August.

Shop at the 11th Buy Pinoy Superstore Fair from August 9 to 13 at the Megatrade Hall 1 at the SM Megamall, while the 11th Metro Trade Expo (MTE) unveils from August 8 to 13 at the Megatrade Hall 2, SM Megamall. The Buy Pinoy fair is organized by the Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc., the Department of Trade and Industry and the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. with the Philippine Import and Export Credit Agency. Organizers of the MTE are the Metalasia Trade Expo Foundation Inc. (METEF) and the OTE Region III.

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LIFESTYLE
Editor Chelo Banal-Perezosa Subeditors Lito B. Zulueta

Blood Compact relived in pageantry

The reenactment presented an authentic slice of Bohol history

DATU Sikatuna (Alfonso Corbetta) and conquistador Miguel Lopez de Legazpi (Winston Sendrijas) forge a treaty of cooperation and friendship in the musical "Sandugo Orisalva."

By Raphael Bardelosano
Contributor

THE DANCE OF BOHOLANO princesses Kamuyan tugging on Rajah Sikatuna's arm and imploring him to ignore Miguel Lopez de Legazpi's arrival in the Philippines is not what most people associate with the blood compact the two men joined in 1565. But it's precisely what the creative minds behind Bohol's Sandugo reenactment, held July 23 in Tagbilaran City, wanted audiences to see.

Kamuyan's prophecy that the Europeans would destroy local civilization, the role that a dozen dancers, lights, played in convincing Sikatuna to accept Legazpi's offer, and the influence of an earlier raid on Bohol by Portuguese slave-traders are parts of the Sandugo story that, until this year's performance, were known by few people other than Boholanos.

The hour-long reenactment, "Sandugo Orisalva," directed by Leigh de Leon, founder and dean of the Bohol Arts and Cultural Heritage Council, recounted the historic meeting between Rajah Sikatuna and Legazpi through interpretive dance, pantomime, song and a narrative soundtrack in Bohol's native Visayan.

Leon said he wanted to "clarify" the Sandugo legend for the audience of over 7,000 by going beyond typical reenactments, which only depict Legazpi and Sikatuna meeting, drinking golden ilhig with each other's blood and little else.

"The performance highlights the impact on the native population and makes people think more of their own culture," Leon said. "It could launch a creative movement rooted in our own history, culture and traditions."

"Many of the people watching the performance will say, 'Did that really happen?'" said Mariquita Lopez, a historian at Holy Name University in Tagbilaran, who wrote the script. "The elements of Blood Compact history that aren't normally accepted make Legazpi and Sikatuna come alive. Without that, it becomes a static, sterile event."

The provincial government and city government shouldered the P3-million production, with the cast of over 200 dancers, an appearance by the Lobot Children's Choir, rapcanoe lighting and costume design, and Cebu's band, picked team of award-winning electrophysicists and composers.

Tagbilaran City Mayor Jose Lim said the performance was worth the expense. After watching the reenactment crowd erupt into cheers when a 15-minute fireworks display accompanied the exit of the reenactment, a triumphant, crowd-pleased Lim called the show "unsurpassed."

He said it was a way to honor Bohol's overseas workers, hundreds of whom return to the island for the Sandugo festival. "They deserve a good celebration," Lim said.

Before the evening reenactment, the crowd enjoyed an afternoon of street dancing by some of the Philippines' best-known troupes. Kalibo's Ati-Atihan dancers, the Masskara crew

MORE >>>

DATU Sikatuna leaves aside his baluyan warriors

Sagot sa Growth Gap ng 'yong anak? Alaska with Lakas Nutribuilder.

Sa Alaska Powdered Filled Milk, sabagong kampanteng kang matatulungan ang pagkilit ng 'yong anak. Dahil dito lang ang may highest levels of Vitamin B Complex, Iron, Calcium at Phosphorus. Kaya bawat lata ng Alaska ubos sa tamang nutrients. Ngayon, para wala kang kaba sa Growth Gap ng 'yong anak, inay Alaska!

ALASKA

Blood Compact relived in pageantry

From page C1

(Argosy Dean Bacolod City and Co. Dr. Cayo renovated Sinulog extended around the audience with their hanging drums, energetic orchestrations and creative costumes.

In between dance performances, a visually parade of celebrities, including Bohol mayor Edgardo Sanchez and fiery "Boom Boom" Bautista, as well as Interviews resource Bobby Saad and his darling daughter Samantha, helped spectators stave off boredom while they waited for darkness to fall so the fireworks could begin.

Stores drawing may be a perennial audience-pleaser, but Lacuna used the marginal "Tandaga Dracula" would be the main event. Lacuna said stores drawing tended to ignore local styles in favor of the more popular catalog stories from Cebu.

"Stores drawing is a charming novelty but it's not conducive to developing and conserving local dance steps," he said. "Borrowing the catalog is a needless way to win an award, but local tradition has been compromised even of what's most commercially viable."

The Sandugo reenactment presented an authentic show of Boholanos for the local audiences, and showcased what Lobad called the island's "greatest human resource"—the talents of the people.

FREE interpretation of a course in modern dance performed by Miss Versia and the Dinamag Dance Theater Company of the Holy Name University in Bohol, with choreography by Julius Salazar and direction by Lutgarda Lobad

2006 DISCOVER HONG KONG YEAR

Get ready for the ultimate shopping extravaganza at the **Hong Kong Shopping Festival** from **24 June** to **31 August, 2006**.

The diverse shopping experiences that offer endless variety and stylish trends are a delight for the whole family. Discover everything you desire from great bargain hunts to top fashion brands. With fabulous discounts and superb services, you and your family will find that Hong Kong truly is the shopping mecca of the world!

What has night shopping and dining, participating stores and restaurants will stay open till 10pm or later so the entire family can indulge in longer hours of shopping. The shopping and dining experiences will bring you even more surprises with a chance to win fantastic prizes from the **Hong Kong Shopping Festival Lucky Draw**.

In between the shopping, your family can take a stroll over to the piazza at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and treat their eyes on the night multimedia water show — **Aqua Fantasia**.

Be sure to get your **Bonus Guide** containing loads of extra shopping and dining offers at any of the in-town HKTA Visitor Information & Services Centres. Don't forget to visit the new and website at **DiscoverHongKong.com** for the latest events and hot deals plus fabulous offers from participating members of the **Hong Kong Shopping Festival**.

There's no better time to visit and discover everything this city has to offer! Besides savoring rare sensations, magic events and an incredible array of entertainment options, Hong Kong has a number of educational destinations for children like museums and theme parks such as the newly opened **Hong Kong Wetland Park**. So what's glittering today. Visit the **Hong Kong Shopping Festival** And watch your family become a bunch of shopaholics!

HONG KONG

UNIQUE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE AWAITS YOU AT THE 2006 HONG KONG SHOPPING FESTIVAL

From 24 June to 31 August, a festive of buying fun sweeps Hong Kong with the 2006 Hong Kong Shopping Festival! This annual shopping extravaganza offers an enthralling and unique visitor experience taking diversity, trendiness and best-value-for-money shopping in Asia's world city to new heights.

Hong Kong offers shoppers fantastic shopping themes: world-class fashion and beauty items, top-of-the-line jewellery and watches, cutting edge consumer electronics and unique Chinese traditions and indulge yourself during this fantastic celebration of shopping!

Shopping fun gets better as night falls. The mood is enhanced as many shops stay open until 10pm or later and some restaurants serve their mouth-watering array of cuisines and special dining treats later still.

And that's not all. Spend to your heart's content and you could go home a winner in the 2006 Hong Kong Shopping Festival Lucky Draw! There is a range of incredible prizes to be won when you spend at participating shops and restaurants and enter the Lucky Draw. So now you have even more reasons to shop and dine to your heart's content.

The Hong Kong Shopping Festival also features a wonderful anchor event called **Aqua Fantasia**, a dazzling multimedia light and water show that creates stunning images!

The Hong Kong Shopping Festival is a wonderful opportunity to indulge yourself in a shopping spree like no other that will surely satisfy your shopping desires!

LIFESTYLE

Pinoy arts and crafts fight back

LAMP of multi-colored leaves, fibers and wooden stand, AJ Arts and Crafts Industries

PAPOY bags, Papelipa

By Ruth L. Navarro

WHAT IS THE FATE OF A pagebuwa leaf?

That it will be a thing of beauty after it has been fortified and shrinkproofed. That it will be admired for years to come while it's snack break, permanently, to a resin in front of a lamp. That from the depths of Tagaytay one it will fly to as far as the United States.

The pagebuwa lead along with the leaves of nara-a, banuyong and other indigenous trees will get its thanks to entrepreneur Alex Lacsamo of AJ's Arts and Crafts Industries.

"I took an idea point to finalize the laminate that will make leaves stick to a resin. We've experimented with different leaves because not all can be fortified," says Lacsamo.

"We even have a sample that we just leave outside the house for the past three to four years just to be sure it won't fall off."

But why the obsession? Why is it important to make it stay on the outside while they could press it between two glasses, the way manufacturers from other countries do?

"The foreign market likes the texture," says Lacsamo. This is what gives them the edge over other manufacturers.

Capiz shells

Like the Lacsamo, Virgilio Sanchez of the Malocot Enterprise Inc. also makes use of indigenous raw materials abundant in the country. For over 15 years, Malocot has been making luminous use of capiz shell. Recently they have expanded their line to making other capiz products.

"The high-quality capiz materials that we use set it apart from the rest of the world," says Sanchez.

"Only few countries in the world have capiz shells but we have the best and the finest. China does not have them."

Malocot has created home décor and other novelty items of shells sourced from Tiburan, Bonto City and parts of Mindoro Occidental.

Paper art

For Papelipa handmade Paper and Crafts owner Teodoro Ricondo, it's not just the raw materials but also the production that make her paper products stand out.

"All our products are handmade. They use fibrous materials like abaca, sabagi, sigue, paper trimmings from printing press and leaves mulberry," says Ricondo. "We even plant our own banana really."

She got the idea to make paper after years of being a research specialist in the Forest Product Research And Development Institute of the Department of Science and Technology.

"We had a hard time getting into the local market because Filipinos does like their paper white and smooth, ours were brown and rough," she says. "But the foreigners liked it."

Finally after so many years, "brown and rough" has finally become a trend in the local market. They are now able to sell gift wrappers, scrapbooks, boxes and other crafts through a leading bookstore.

Despite tough global competition, Pinoys designs continue to make strides and break into the export market

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Deep passion for portraiture

By Gino Borromeo
Contributor

WE HAVE LATELY SEEN A SURGE OF activity in portraiture, that while many are skilled, as they say, only a few are chosen.

One artist who has pursued portraiture with abiding faith and unrelenting passion is Rollie Liwag, who, since establishing her stint at the Art Students League in New York, has been getting a large number of commissions.

Liwag draws and paints various subjects without letup, be they outside exposures, close matrons, surrounds flunks, indigits, or, as the occasion demands, ordinary people with extraordinary qualities.

To be sure, the artist does not rely on the proverbial Midas touch to the underlining the local scenes with genuine artistic lustre. With a life-to-life and infinitely evocative hits she has lived abroad for 18 years, raised a family with her husband and is doing a variety of jobs, and, hehe, turning 60 on the prime of her life), she has proven accustomed to the ways of the rich and the powerful, the struggling and the successful, the old and young, who are now harbouring for a representation of their image or selves in their homes and offices.

No wonder, with her flair for seeing through the subject, mainly by rendering their life-like image, Liwag's fame has grown, as well as her clientele.

Though she has made headway simply by looking deep into her subjects and rendering a lifesize photographic evidence, she leaves a lot of room for her truth to take over and do wonders. She has developed a remarkable facility in painting the eyes, which, she admits, is among the most difficult to paint, the human part of the race portraiture.

But Liwag will finds time to work on other subjects, such as women and children, landscapes, consciously switching from pastel to acrylic, and integrating her skills in the various media.

She is personally challenged by more complex compositions and is seriously working on her canvases in preparation for her first solo, which she calls "Faces, Bodies and Places."

And as a newly inducted member of the United Society of Artists, Liwag is making plans for the group's annual convention in May next year, after which it will be back to school at the Art Students League in New York, where she is all set to enroll in another course.

Bay

Another dedicated portrait artist, Joey Bay, has just concluded his third solo, "People I Know," at Galerie Anne on N. Garcia, Bel-Air, Makati.

It was a radically divergent show as compared to his last one called "Body Language," where his portraits revealed a great deal of fetishistic pain and anguish. Painted in the manner of Lucian Freud, the subjects were a harrowing gallery of human twisted evidenced by expressions of paranoia, fear, alienation, doubt and disgust.

In the current show, Bay has chosen to paint familiar faces—those of his peers (National Artist Ang Kiukok, long-time business associate and fellow painter Lydia Velasco, advertising ad-imagist and painter Ishmir Wilhamjaya, even Cid Reyes are among those easily recognizable).

Bay's expressionist way with the brush evokes a sense of casual intimacy with his subjects, who are shown to be indulging in some liberating moments of friendly intimate gaze into the viewer's eyes. Indeed, the paintings speak volumes of moods and range of emotions, mainly through the subjects' eyes.

Regal, for instance, is Velasco's impartial pose in one portrait, which comes complete with her trademark period Tiffany-and-carved eyebrows.

Reyes is captured in his usual contemplative gaze, with fingers lost-weird deep into his temple. Jose Reyes then reveals a wide-eyed curiosity simply by holding a can of his eyeglasses and leaning right to the viewer.

And, topping it all, there is Joey Bay himself, looking like one of the Three Silly Men, hefty and moustache turned completely white, his hand cupped on his chin, a Zen-like stare that leaves his face as though it was his very soul.

E-mail the author at gborromeo@yahoo.com

PORTRAITS by Rollie Liwag: (top) Former Marya ng Pilipinas Carolyn Rudhay; (above) the artist's nubile, Mel Liwag

SELF-PORTRAIT by Joey Bay

MOTHER Regina Pacific Samson with baby Vito Antonio

VISUAL ARTS

"Trans Exotic" at Heritage

"Trans Exotic," a group exhibit, opens Aug. 10 at the Heritage Art Gallery (4/F, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong). It features Memilin Arandilla, Angel Cacnio, Ferdie Carnaje, Primo Demaisip, Rodolfo Dizon, Julius Limpe, Jun Martinez, Ramil Miranda, Anthony Loreto Ramos, Ton Ray-mundo, Fernando Sena and Victor Wood. The exhibit will run until Aug. 22.

Women artists at Art Center

Ongoing at the Art Center (SM Megamall/4/F), Bldg. A, is "Girls Will Be Girls" as curated by Nilo Ilarde. Organized by the Finale Art Gallery, the exhibit features the female artists Jennie Cahagang, Lynn Ganzalena, Nona Garcia, Geraldine Javier, Liz Medina and Nonoi Valles. Overwhelming in scope, vast in composition and rich in underlayings, the show endorses contemporary themes of solitude, sexuality and selfhood in relation to a world at once familiar and alienating. "Girls Will Be Girls" runs until Aug. 13. (MEMORIAM)

Valdizno at Mag:Net

Mag:Net Gallery (MS-7 the Loop, G.J Ledesma, MRT-LRT compound, Mother Ignacia Avenue and Edgardo Lopez Street, QC) features fresh creations in "Reductio ad Absurdum," Aug. 8-30. The title refers to the contemporary overreach of painting driven by cultural flattening across and blending only marketable patterns. Call 410-0099 or email magnet.platoff@gmail.com or visit magnet.com.ph.

"DRAGON Fly," by Trek Valdizno

"REDLINE," by Rock Dirion

Drilon, Pacquing et. al. in Pasay

"Fractus Mauri Collapse 1," a group exhibit by Ronald Amading, Kate Balcueta, Rock Drilon, Bernardo Pacquing and Pepe San Pascual, will be on view Aug. 10-30 at Magnet Gallery Power in Makati.

Bacolor's "Old and Famous" conceptualizes a tongue-in-cheek reference to the traditional artistic medium of oil on canvas. Amading's large-scale painting is done in contrast on board. San Pascual's "Gulao" fills the predominantly blue canvas space with silhouettes of animals, such as horses, ostriches and mosques. Pacquing shows works from his two-year stay in Malaysia while Drilon will present a large painting done recently.

Magnet Pasay is at Power Center, Power cb Power and Sadaco Street, Makati City. Call 817-1788 or email magnet.platoff@gmail.com or visit magnet.com.ph.

Tuazon at Mezzanine

Mezzanine features artist Richard Tuazon in "Neon Ain't Legal," until Aug. 31. Tuazon's paintings revolve around the theme "crime." The Mezzanine is inside the

"RED Wine in a Glass," by Richard Tuazon

Cultivate Commercial along Nueno Street in Pasay City. Young artists who want to showcase their works may contact Leizl Mahilum-Westerhout at 851 5815.

Lecture at Lopez

Lopez Museum presents "Stories about Preserving Cultural Heritage" on Aug. 12, 2-4 p.m., at the Lopez Library, Architect Paulo Alcazaren will be the speaker. He will talk about the basics of architectural photography using a digital camera. Call 631 0411.

Major book sale

POWERBOOKS SPECIALTY STORE is having a big book blowout for used 50-plus readers with The PowerBooks Powerreads.

All books will be included in the sale, with discounts easily identifiable to customers through color-coded stickers that the nearest PowerBooks branch until Aug. 31 to enjoy up to 75 percent off on eBooks.

You can even get a PowerBooks metal bookmarks to accompany your reading spree. Just present P2,500 worth of purchase receipts or P2,000 worth for Powerreward and Powerreward Plus holders at the cashier (for single receipt purchases) or the customer service counter (for accumulated receipts) to claim your premium item.

PowerBooks Specialty Store has branches at Greenbelt 4 (757-6410 to 29), Megamall (470-2899 to 901, Alabang Town Center (850-8462 to 63), Glorietta 3 (757-0967), Shangri-La (636-3624), Robinsons Place Ermita (521-1111) and Mall of Asia (556-0144).

LIFESTYLE

"INVIC," by Gupio

Group show of sculptures

METRA GALLERY introduces up-and-coming sculptors Jun Nicdao, MJB and Romeo Sapio in an exhibition titled "Sculptural Serendipity." The exhibition opens 7 p.m., Aug. 8, at the gallery, #3 L. Del Mundo St., Q.C.

The title behooves the somewhat circumstantial, under which Nicdao, MJB and Sapio exist. The three artists initially got together to explore the possibility of using their talents in setting up an export business. But in due time, they recognized their true passion lay in creating original works of fine art.

"Sculptural Serendipity" showcases a wide range of styles and techniques employed by each artist. MJB interprets his figures on a very modern, abstracted style with emphasis on form and proportion. Sapio displays an unshakable classical skill with his beautifully rendered nudes.

Equally impressive are Nicdao's abstract modern contemporary touch, no doubt one of the results of his apparent secular turn from religious art. Added Theodosio Minerva.

Call 5342491.

"REFLECTIONS," by MJB

"SERPIS," by Jun Nicdao

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SUITE of Philippine Art Nouveau furniture commissioned for an overnight visit by Gen. Gen. Francis B. Harrison to Tasi, Batangas. Collection of Manny Villavicencio-Jovero

Chairs go beyond their function. They are presented as social commentary

Be seated at the Metropolitan Museum

VIENNA chair of bent wood manufactured by Thonet Industries in Austria in the turn of the century is still in production today

AN OUTSTANDING SERIES OF exhibitions illustrating the development of Philippine character now presents its next installment at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila. The exhibition program presents the rural Philippine culture upon train, going beyond the stereotypical visual-arts window to include objects of daily life.

Manolo uses ordinary objects to portray Philippine culture, everyday things such as baskets, carrying, clothing, folk art, religious icons, old photos and contemporary stuff usually taken for granted by most Filipinos whose daily lives are surrounded by what they perceive as ordinary.

Whatever its origin, an object tells a story, whether it be an heirloom or an export-oriented T-shirt manufactured in the past week.

Manolo's sharp vision transforms ordinary objects into extraordinary storytelling items that powerfully express attitudes, habits and beliefs of Filipinos, which makes viewers unaccustomed artists.

Manolo has organized exhibits that bring out our shared Philippine roots. He has presented all facets of Bohemian culture from two Spanish colonial church museums through traditional basketry and craft items of recent design innovations to the export market.

His last visual Metropolitan viewers on an encounter walk through Quiapo, highlighting the quarter's treasures, from its surviving fiesta na bato and chow fun, trivia residents to neighborhood miscues like the saving-saving still outside Quiapo church.

Exhibiting everyday stuff removes cultures from savagely perceived boon-country attitudes, returning it to earth, and bringing culture back to the people where it rightfully belongs.

The present exhibition at the Met uses four Philippine life evolved through the interiors relevant era by showing different chairs that people sat on during those days. This is an emotional journey and a visual treat not to be missed.

In the "Upuan" exhibit, chairs go beyond their function. They are presented as social commentary.

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

"For many centuries," says the exhibit catalogue text, "chairs were articles of state and dignity rather than items of ordinary use. They have their origin in the hierarchic society of medieval Europe, where only the king sat on chairs."

Ordinary folk of the time were lucky to have a bench or stool to sit on. The world has turned full circle since. Now we all have chairs to sit on, but we can't sit on all of them.

Chairs of authority in dining rooms, boardrooms, reception halls and on the ceremonial dais are reserved to special persons. In airports, special people gain access to airline lounges where seats are much more comfortable than outside, where only ordinary chairs, not much change from the stools and benches of medieval days.

The rural Filipino, the exhibit points out, spends most of his day outdoors with little need for chairs. Sleep serve as stools, and branches become bench, or, fifteen just squat on the ground.

Squatting was not for all. Governors of Castillian elites have discussed community issues while ceremonially seated on the honored stone seats of the circular dipas. Sculptural tableaux and potesta have ornate seats on pedestal altars. Dressy comes with privilege and special seating.

Rural people traditionally sit or squat under the shade of their bahay na nipa to cool off from the hot sun. Inside their houses, there is a minimum of furniture since they live in a one-room, multipurpose space. Floor sleeping, cooking and eating happen within the same area, too much facilitate easy movement and flexibility.

When the Spanish moved people from rural to urban areas, "a more sedate kind of living and a new social order" developed, which "increased the chances as well as the need of families to socially intermix with each other within the confines of their residences to enhance their prestige and power.

"Such interaction required showing off the elegant design and grandeur of their dishes and linens as well as the splendor and magnificence of their furniture," the catalogue says. Such can be seen at Casa Manila in the entrance. Casa Isnovels in Cebu and the Museo De La Salle in Dasmariñas (Cavite).

During the American colonial period, people flocking to urban centers seeking employment adopted in a consumer-driven boom. Government offices, schools, corporate structures, and houses rose quickly all over the Philippines, all needing furniture.

With lifestyle changes intensified by the new colonial regime, areas within offices and residences compartmentalized into smaller, separate spaces, requiring a new range of specialized furniture for living or dining rooms, bedrooms, offices, schools.

Craftsmen designed and executed a variety of new furniture, adapting American designs to the tropics. The furniture of the era demonstrate "stylistic hybridity, ... making colonialism appear as a civilizing consistently seldom does a description of its native civilization."

To see "Upuan" to revisit the social history of Philippine craftsmanship. The exhibit runs until Sept. 9.

It is not only "Upuan" that caught its museum eyes in September, but Manolo is ready his museum at Metropolitan Museum director as well.

He deserves a solid round of appreciation for his pioneering determination in telling the Philippine story through the cultural of his everyday.

"Upuan" is one of those rare Manila exhibits that expand the horizons of anyone who takes the time to experience it. The exhibit is especially enlightening for practicing or student architects and interior designers needing to take inspiration from Philippine tradition.

Interesting and educational as they may be, Metropolitan Museum exhibits are understood opportunities. Many people should go to see them, but those the Filipino is uncomfortable into a museum, going individual. Maybe exhibits should go to the malls to reach more people.

THE HEIGHT of barber technology is seen in this chair from the Dondi Mandy Sitang collection.

Heritage watch

"Bid for Heritage" to be around art and design auction organized by the Heritage Conservation Society. It takes place Aug. 26, 6 p.m., at The Loft, Bordered Drive, Makati.

Proceeds benefit the projects of the Heritage Conservation Society, particularly the BCS Depêd Shrange School-house Restoration Program, which has completed restorations of American period schoolhouses in Bataan, Baguio and Ana Bernardo Photographs

In 2006-07, buildings in Teachers Camp, Baguio, and public schools in Zambanga and Davao will be restored by the project.

Tickets for "Bid for Heritage" are available at the HCS Showroom at Mayco Pambers, Roxas Boulevard. Call 521-2239 or 522-8497.

E-mail the author at pvlle_jalan @gmail.com

JEWELRY case, Malvel

CAPIZ lamp, Malvel

CELLPHONE holders, Malvel

Pinoy arts and crafts fight back

From page D1

Accessories

Assigned Espinosa of Assigned Craft Enterprise, meanwhile, says it's the unique design of her accessories that keeps her small business a success.

"I don't do the same designs twice so all my buyers can be assured that each piece is unique and one-of-a-kind," she explains.

Although she says she has no background in fine arts, she has a knack for combining colors.

NOVELTY items, Malvel

These entrepreneurs have managed to get through most of the problems in business through ingenuity coupled with hard work and a large dose of passion. They, along with other 200 exhibitors, will be presenting their products in trade fair at SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

Most of their products are for export products and exhibitor-only kyla-foreign buyers.

"My lamps are available in some high-end malls. But people will get to shapes if they buy it directly from me," says Lacanio.

The 10th Buy Pinoy Exporters Trade Fair opens on Aug. 8-13, in Megatrade Hall 2, while the 11th Philippine Trade Expo opens next row and runs until Aug. 15, in Megatrade Hall 2.

HANDMADE cards, Paperkyo

Pinoy artists take part in Asian fest

TWO SCULPTORS AND NINE painters represent the Philippines in the 22nd Asian International Art Exhibition (AIAE) at the Singapore Art Museum in the tiger state of Singapore, which began July 19 and runs until Aug. 13.

Newly -Isolated National Artist Bernardo leads the Philippine delegation with his acrylic "Kog Chum."

AIAE Philippine committee members Ramon Orlina, Isaac Peralvero-Bautista, Shelly Avilado and Ed Castro Villaluna also submit new works for the 2006 AIAE, as well as invited members James Gubin, Jocelyn Feng, Lydia Velasco, Claudelyn Ty, Wilmer Amadeo and Jay Morales.

The themes may vary but "there is a distinctive narrative quality in the works" of Filipino artists in this year's AIAE, Amadeo Avellana writes in the essay for the exhibition catalogue.

"There is a story, not in verse, independent of the artist, hidden in the canvas," he says.

The Philippine participation is sponsored and supported by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Directorate Philippine Corporation, Primere Insurance, Lane Moving and Storage, Apolo Hotel-ton and DBS 7.

The Singapore exhibit follows the successful staging of the 20th edition of the art show that ran from November 2005-March 2006 at the Ayala Museum in Makati. The Philippine Committee, Amos Arden Inc. contributed a record number of participating artists and played host to delegates from 11 Asian countries.

The annual exhibit fosters a continuing fellowship and visual dialogue among artists, sculptors, printmakers in the Asian continent, bringing gaps and constantly breaking barriers on the regional art scene.

KIKUJIRO Iwasa, Kyogen master

UMEWAKA performs the "Dance of Sisa."

NOH master Ko Sato Jiro Fujita conducts training rehearsal at the UP College of Music with Jiro Umeki translating.

Unique Noh adaptation of 'Sisa' to be staged

THE 600-YEAR-OLD NOH THEATER tradition of Japan was performed by six Japanese Noh masters with Filipinos as part of the commemorative ceremony of the Philippines-Japan Friendship Day.

Hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines and the Embassy of Japan, the joint performance introduced a new form of collaboration between the two countries, deepening their friendship.

The Noh masters performed with students and actors of the University of the Philippines Ateneo in "Ukiwa/ Dance of Sisa," recently at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, BGH Plaza. The show marked 50 years of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines.

Nanbiku Imevuda, Ph.D., Noh master for Shite (main character) and assistant professor of the Musashi University of Art and Culture, led the Japanese Noh masters. A Japan Foundation visiting professor for Japan Studies of the UP Center for International Studies, he has been holding intensive Noh training, rehearsal for Filipinos, the first of its kind in the country and probably in the world.

Imevudas area joined by his fellow masters: Yasiki Inoue, Kyogen master; Jiro Fujita Noh master for Nohkan (flute); Kosaku Hayamya, Noh master for Kiai (main character); Akashihiro Hisada, Noh master for Kotsuzumi (shoulder drum) and Shigeji Hirata, Noh master for Otsuzumi (hip drum); and the UP-CD Noh Theater Ensemble.

Noh is a standard theatrical form which combines elements of dance, drama, music and poetry to create highly-aesthetic performances.

Noh developed as a distinct theater art form in the 14th century during the Muromachi Period (1336- 1568), making it the oldest extant professional theater in the world.

Nohgaku—the total art of Noh and Kyogen—was proclaimed by Unesco a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2001.

Sisa, revered as the oldest prototype of Noh, consists of dances, and no lines in existence in the 16th century, which are designed to suit the gods in performing for peace and prosperity to the land and long life for the people.

"Dance of Sisa" was taken from "Nag Pagkalalaboy ni Sisa kang Rizal sa Lageiom," by Amelia Lapeña Bonifacio, professor emeritus of UP Diliman. It's a redesigned version as a Noh play of Jose Rizal's fine character from the novel "Noli Me Tangere."

"Ukiwa/Dance of Sisa" was supported by the Agency of Cultural Affairs of Japan, Japan Foundation, Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines Inc., Japanese Association of Manila, Japan Airlines, Shimizu Corporation and Art and Culture, Office of Sen. Pandilo Lacson, National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Embassy of the Philippines in Japan and the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines.

Conceived and produced by Amparo Adelina C. Umali of the UP Center for International Studies and directed by Noh master Umewaka, "Ukiwa/Dance of Sisa" will have a repeat performance by an all-Filipino cast at the UP Diliman Theater on Aug. 11 at 7 p.m. and on Aug. 12-13 at 3 p.m. Call 426-7515.

NOH master for Shite Hoshiko Umewaka conducts Noh training rehearsal.

BALLET Philippines company members

'All That Jazz' from Ballet Philippines

BALLET PHILIPPINES, ON ITS 37th season, presents "All That Jazz" on Aug. 11, 10 p.m., Solo Night; 12 (2 p.m. and 8 p.m.) and 13 (3 p.m.) at the CCP Main Theater.

"All That Jazz" is a dance extravaganza performed to jazz classics such as George Gershwin's well-loved "Rhapsody in Blue," "The Man I Love," "Summer Time," and "I Love You, Porgy" and the music of legendary jazz singers such as Ella Fitzgerald, Lou Rawls and Louie Armstrong, as inspirations for the show episodes.

Adding new meringue to the show are the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, Bodjie Abrahan Laurence, Ronan Ocampo, Calamba and Pinky Marquez.

The Surnmer Foundation and Metro Pacific Corporation support Ballet Philippines' "All That Jazz."

Call 551-8001, 551-8002, or 8225871, or visit www.ballet.com.ph.

BY DAN NOYE
Angel Gabriel and Carlos Arbis

Tanghalang Pilipino mounts 'Orfeo sa Impiyerno'

TO OPEN ITS 20TH SEASON, TANGHALANG Pilipino presents "Orfeo sa Impiyerno," a Filipino translation of Jacques Offenbach's "Orpheus Descending."

Directed by Columbia University scholar José Montilla, the production will run at the Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino (CCP Little Theater) from Aug. 11-27, with matinee shows at 3 p.m. (Saturdays and Sundays) and evening performances at 8 p.m. (Fridays and Saturdays).

"Orfeo sa Impiyerno" is about Begnis Revilla, a passionate middle-aged woman (premiere theater actress Shamaine Centenera-Buencamino) with a domineering husband, Abe (noted musical comedy actor, playwright, director and artist Music Ofilada).

Her life alters somewhat when Val Javier's (actor for stage, TV and film Nel Ejares) new

SHAMAINE Centenera-Buencamino and Nel Ejares Sese

tenderfoot outside town and he comes asking for a job in his store. The woman surrenders to the advances of the young guitar player and fallen love ensues again.

The other cast members are Bodz D'Melo, Perseve D'Haro, Crispin Pineda, soprano Josephine Gomez, Modes Kanapi, Richard Cannon, Tess Antolin, Mitoli Magdes, Bella Barrios, Sunni Fierras, Marjorie dela Cuesta, Jing De, Randy Villanueva and Bong Cabrera.

"Orfeo sa Impiyerno" was translated to Filipino by Georgelyn Jesus II.

Eduardo Celia of the CCP Production Design Center is set designer. Lighting design is by Mihnan de Jesus; costume design by Bambi Yan; sound design by Arthur Joaquin; and Barbara Tan-Tiongco is technical director.

Call the TP office at 8323661, 8321125 locals 3020/3021 or 8928. 9333381. Tickets are also available at Ticketworld outlets.

Poet Fidelito Cortez in homecoming

POET FIDELITO CORTEZ is featured in "Everyday Things Quotidien: Poetics," a special reading session at the conference hall of the Center for Creative Writing and Studies (CCWS) of the University of Santo Tomas on Aug. 10 at 4 p.m.

Cortez, who has been residing in the US for several years now, will read his new works. He will be formally welcomed by his friend, poet-critic Ophelia Dimalanta, director of the CCWS.

The reading is part of a lecture series on Filipino expatriate writers. Previous speakers included E. Xavier Lozada, Marianne Villanueva and Norma Belza.

The series is organized by the UST Department of Literature and Languages, Faculty of Arts and Letters, and Literary Journal, and endorsed by the Varsitarian, the official student organ of UST.

The reading is open to the public.

"WAITING for a Doorstep to Sound"

"SHADOWING in 'Technicolor'"

Camille Ver's verities

By Jessica Jaluague-Bautista
Correspondent

FOR HER FIRST EXHIBIT, Camille Ver chose 16 phrases which she felt described her in some ways. She then turned the semantic selection into abstractforms, which now comprise "Climb," on view at Gallery Mian in Megamall (ast. 6677302).

Among the lines are lyrics of songs. "Exposure" is from the oriental tune "Living in Bloom," which is included on the soundtrack of "Great Expectations," the latest film adaptation of Charles Dickens' novel about an artist and his obsession with a living muse.

"This World Was Never Meant for One as Beautiful as You," a line from Don Mclean's "Vincent," is the title of her tribute to Van Gogh. His art also inspired the piece "Gogh Figure."

The introspective approach Ver employs in her art-making complements her persona, which may be viewed in terms of multi-colored frustrations or simple-response inconducive images, except she does not see sense.

It is as if her paintings were critiqued fragments of some existent dissatisfaction of his created matter, allowing audiences a peek into the inner workings of her mind.

With this body of works, Camille says she aspires "who she is, and where she is now." Though she is not privileged the works—and the title—show a desire to improve her life. The "climb" is better seen to confronted by the short horizontal strokes in the paintings, much like rungs on a ladder.

Though the upward slope sometimes indicate the artist's ambitions, they too, are passing phases of concern. In them, we also perhaps her desire for an occasional change of space and circumstance.

Painting is one such refuge for her, yet what she longs for takes the form of locations of varying distances on her canvases that are usually observed landscapes and townscapes.

The views pollute sky and green ground of "Waiting for a Doorstep to Sound" is Ver's expression for her love of rain. A white vertical structure seems like a lighthouse. Similar to the oblique application of the white paint that results in the twirls, like appearance of a tornado, again an allusion to storms.

Beyond her presentation of rustic and pedestrian, Ver's blurry cityscapes portray a more pressing kind of secure. Most of her pieces hint at buildings in the horizon, but they are her super, unevenly spaced. Brought to mind are abandoned industrial facilities or remains of bombed out cities.

"I Still Believe There Is a God," despite its starkness, is reminiscent of rest and prime, suburban Christian cultural artifacts in the aftermath of rioting. It calls to mind the numerous, furtive expansion, and the gray of warships.

Commercial gray serves as a backdrop for structures in reds and blues in "Quietly Controlled," and the steps meant for climbing may be seen as falling missiles of an urban area, with the night sky brightly lit by blasts.

"Dreaming in Technicolor" is perhaps a rendition of just precisely that, but one may also see a mid-air explosion and black clouds.

In psychological terms, sandboxing is where visual perception coincides with reality. Camille the has thus not only shared her personal battle, she entices viewers with possible discoveries of their own.

"QUIETLY Controlled"

"HAWAII."

E-mail the author at majordp@gmail.com

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ENTERTAINMENT

Pretty bookworms urge kids to read

By Armie Edina

LOOKS ALONE DO NOT A BEAUty queen make. Wit, intelligence and personality also matter in determining on whose pretty head the crown should sit.

Bulgeing Binibining Pilipinas titlists Ana Marie Igot and Jenelle Lou Wilmont know this only too well. They agree that...aside from makeup sessions and weight training, reading helped prepare them for the annual pageant last March.

The statuesque duo, both self-confessed bookworms, graced the opening of the Anson Group of Companies' book fair at the Anson Tower in Araneta Center, Quezon City last week. Highlight of the event was the formal turnover of book donations from Scholastic, largest publisher and distributor of children's books in the world, for the conglomerate's library program and library.

Ana and Jenelle Lou were delighted to help push Scholastic's advocacy: "Helping children around the world to read and learn."

"Instead of watching television, children should grab a book in their free time," said Ana.

Jenelle Lou added, "Reading improves one's vocabulary and broadens the imagination."

BB. PILIPINAS International Jenelle Lou Wilmont, left, and Bb. Pilipinas World Ana Marie Igot, at the book fair.

Ambassadors

Michael Cruz, Scholastic general manager, was excited about having the two as "reading ambassadors."

He explained, "Our battle cry is, 'A book in every child's hand.' The Binibining Pilipinas may help bring this campaign closer to people."

During the program, Ana and Jenelle Lou read stories to little wards of the Anson's Group's day care center. Ana read Ruby Kanoy's "The Lucky Day," the story of a pig who converts a den. "I personally chose this because kids are always interested in stories with animals," she said.

The children sang with Jenelle Lou as she read Bulbrot Blumdil's "Love You Forever," about the bond between a mother and son.

Jenelle Lou competes in the 80th International pageant in Beijing, China this November. She will bring a book published by the Department of Tourism to be donated to the Miss World library when she competes in Warsaw, Poland on Sept. 30.

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LOVEBONITO BY ELIZABETH CHONGUID

ATOMO AND WEBBY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PANANGIAN

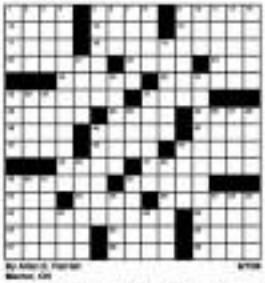
READ MACHINE BY MARIA ABRERA

HELICOPTERMOM BY JOHNES TEJADA

TULOOK BY PAPU-PAPU TATSUN PALAMBRUNG

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

	4	3		8				
	1					8	6	2
	8			7				3
		1	6		2			
4			1	7	8			6
			3		5	4		
2			4				9	
9	6	4					8	
				6		3	2	

Difficulty Level ★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

7	5	8	1	4	9	3	6	2
6	3	9	5	2	7	8	4	1
4	2	1	8	6	3	5	7	9
1	8	5	2	7	6	9	3	4
3	9	6	4	5	8	7	1	5
2	7	4	9	3	1	2	5	8
9	6	8	4	3	2	1	5	7
5	4	3	7	1	5	9	2	6
8	1	7	6	9	5	4	8	3

Unique festival of German films starts Thursday

By Constantino C. Tejero

LOCAL CINEMAFILES, BEARER ITS THAT TIME of year when the Goethe-Institut holds its unique film festival. No one who is into not only film evaluation but also film history should miss this third edition of the fest, particularly its first offering.

Every Thursday of August at 6 p.m., a feature titled "Das will ich erzählen" (I'll tell you) will be screened in the SM Megamall Cinemas with live band accompaniment by some of the country's more progressive musicians. [Admission is free.]

There aren't just any wishy-washy Hollywood fare, either. These are certified masterpieces and just of the German variety, to daintily but of world dreams.

It is no timing spin-ins that if one should ever plunge into Pure-jarvis or Tarkovsky one must first have done silent cinema. Otherwise, one's film appreciation would be half-baked.

Eroticism

On Aug. 10, Robert Wiene's 1919 "Das Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" will be shown, accompanied by Radioactive Sago Project.

This is the quintessential work of fantasy. Expressionism, that cinematic outgrowth of Van Gogh, Nowal, Edvard Munch, Kandinsky and Gerlike.

It is the clearest example of that style of filmmaking, as the viewer can unmistakably observe in its set design: exhibit without rectangular distorted (tilted) chimneys painted on walls and floors, exaggerated scale and distorted perspective, doors and windows askew, clothes torn and zoolegs almost to nipple, severe passageways, streets winding to nowhere.

This film has been faulted for stiffness in the acting, but we have to consider the period's stage mode. After, stylized acting is just right for its theme of emptiness and misery, unreasonableness, nervousness. In fact, the alienating gestures [illegible] reminiscent to the film's neurotic quality.

One of the first expressionist films to mount out of Germany "Dr. Caligari" is said to have helped lay the groundwork for such Expressionist classics as DW Murnau's "Nosferatu" and Fritz Lang's "Metropolis." We remember an updating of it in the 1960s, but that was no more than an unpalatable thriller, with none of the mystery and evocation.

Sensuality

On Aug. 17, Paul Wegener and Carl Boese's 1920 "The Golem" will be shown with music by Drip.

Based on a Jewish folk tale about a Talmudic rabbi who creates a gigantic warrior out of clay to protect the ghetto, the film is important not just as a cinematic gem but also for film historians. The legend is recognized as the source of the Frankenstein tale and the film feels more barbaric, thus more authentic, than their never-ending "Frankenstein" series.

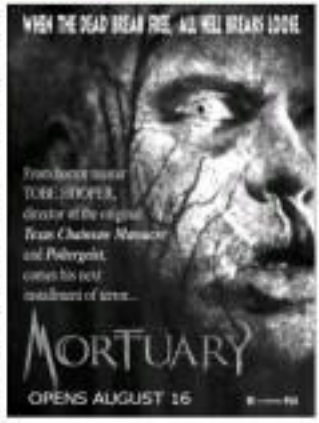
But one film not to be Metropolitan 80s-

Sisters another critic "Its breathtaking beauty and artistry evoke it to [illegible] viewing, and the exquisite tragic ending—conceived immorally and rhythmically as a gradually developing climax—is one of the pinnacles of silent cinema."

Finally, on Aug. 31, Joe May's 1920 "Indien" will be screened, with music by Cynthia Alexander.

Gilliel an one of the last great German Expressionist films of the silent era, this one draws more rank as "Starring the fabulous Mia Amaon in her most heartbreaking role, this is a luxuriously produced classic where tragic fortunes and fatal encounters are shaped alongside the inanimate ruin of traffic."

Now very students! It is hype such as this that makes everybody roll eyes.



ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: ... Text or voice feedback ... to LDP (Globe) or ... (Smart)

ANNE in cream tub Chanel swimsuit

MERYL in Donna Karan trench coat

BLACK velvet strapless gown with beaded bow before jacket by Valentino; art deco pendant by Leighton.

KELLY green mushroom coat; b-by Louis; black Mongolian lamb swing coat; b-by Gucci... both at Anton.

Racks of designer clothes in 'The Devil Wears Prada'

"MERYL LOVE FASHION," Academy Award winner Meryl Streep says. "It's something to get excited about this movie."

In "The Devil Wears Prada," Streep stars as Miranda Priestly, the world's most terrifying fashion editor.

"The movie focuses on the relationship between Miranda and her assistant, Andrea (Anne Hathaway), who comes to New York with a dream of working for the famous magazine and ends up working for Miranda.

Andrea sees her goals start to narrow ... when Miranda tells Andrea how much she likes her ... she could look like Miranda, she says, "My job was to make Meryl look as absolutely beautiful as I could. And to dress Andrea, but to have people say, 'Wow, Meryl looks great!'"

Anne Hathaway's character feels Miranda's pressure, makes bad fashion choices and ... "How can you be the fashion bag."

..."The Devil Wears Prada" opens Aug. 30 in theaters nationwide. From 20th Century Fox. (AP)

BLACK wool cape, Chanel jacket, ... tights; Tiffany & Co. ... shoes, ... boots; ... leather thigh highboots.

ON MERYL, charcoal gray jacket with light blue pin stripe by Bill Blass, right; beaded jacket also by Bill Blass, far right.

CENTER, Ann in a David Rodriguez top

ROUNDUP

Leno subs for Ebert

CHICAGO—Jay Leno's chumbs are about to get a workout.

"The Tonight Show" host is filling in as a guest critic on the movie review show "Siskel & Ebert" while regular co-host Roger Ebert recuperates from cancer surgery.

Leno will be the first of at least two guest hosts. Director Kevin Smith is slated to host in a show airing Aug. 12-13.

Ebert, 64, is in Chicago hospital, where he is in good condition "and improving each day" from surgery last month to repair complications from a previous cancer surgery, the show said in a statement.

This week's episode of "Siskel & Ebert" was taped in Los Angeles to accommodate Leno's schedule. AP

Water crisis probe

EQUITE Rep. Lanseting Arats chave boardrooks to test the tap water to the Aug. 9 episode of "Probe."

Cherbe Lanzo investigates allegations against National Dairy Authority administrator Edmundo Balmeo, who has been ordered because of alleged violations of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

Also featured is Sister Mary Placid, founder of an organization hosting annual retreats and giving opportunities to those willing to learn classical music.

100th 'CSI'

ITEMS: 25 airs the 100th episode of "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" on Aug. 9 at 7:30 p.m.

The special episode, "Cat-O-Cheapo," brings together the Las Vegas crime labs' heroes for another twisted mystery written by series producer Jerry Stahl.

To the rescue are Gil Grissom (William Petersen), Catherine Willows (Marg Helgenberger), Warrick Brown (Gary Dourdan), Nick Stokes (George Eads), Greg Sanders (Eric Szmanda), Jim Brass (Paul Guilfoyle) when the LVPD discovers a young strangled named Melody stabbed to death inside her car.

New 'CSI: Miami'

MIAMI: CSI: continues their dedicated defense for crime victims in "CSI: Miami (Season 4)," which air Wednesday, 10 p.m. on ABS.

The all-new episodes see the investigators in a daily quest to collect and analyze evidence which takes them to the darkest, deepest, and most extreme corners—a half-closed room ruined by mayo, bodies in the pool of a mansion, and more bodies dumped by pirates.

'Creepy Hideouts'

ON DISCOVERY Travel and Living, "Destination Plush: Creepy Hideouts" takes viewers all over the globe, uncovering the scary details of haunted lodging and visiting some of most recognizable current tourist sites on the planet, including Scandinavian and the Great Pyramids of Giza.

It also reveals viewers to the grisly of some of the world's most notorious figures, including Michelangelo, Rudolph Valentino and Jim Morrison. Host walks viewers through the hidden nooks and chambers that for hauntable some of the most famous sites in the world.

Beginning tomorrow, the series airs every night from 11 p.m. to 12 a.m. and encores the next day from 9 to 10 a.m.

HOUSE

'House' premier

"HOUSE (Season 2)" premieres on Aug. 14 on AXN with mysterious, medicine and patients with diseases threatening the doctors' lives.

An old patient refuses to settle a score with Dr. House—finally. Because the official question for all the House team and the no-holds-barred investigations into the medical issues they themselves, is it hands-on instinct, medical reasoning and pure intelligence at its deepest.

With House's unconventional tactics and emotional brutality, patients can never decide if he's the worst doctor or the best ever.

The series airs Mondays at 10 p.m.

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ENTERTAINMENT

MUSICAL Director Mel Villena is interviewed in "Pinoy pa rock rules."

ABC 5 exec confirms talent 'piracy'

By Ma'ami R. Cruz
Photos by Jon Bacon Poweller

AN ABC 5 OFFICIAL HAS confirmed reports that sarcontestant in the talent search program "Philippine Idol" has dropped out of the competition to join a rival singing contest —after another TV network reportedly approached several contestants and convinced them to switch channels.

"We are sad because kids have to face disappointments (here or over)," Perci Intalan, ABC 5 Creative and Entertainment Production head told Inside Entertainment on Wednesday. "They are still new in the business. From our end, we are [forever] hosted of hosting obligations; other networks decided to just get 'Philippine Idol' contestants, apparently because they saw that the host have come here."

An ABC 5 insider told the site who left (since) ABS-CBN's "Pinoy Dream Academy," which has the same format as "Idol," "Dream Academy" is a franchise from the same Dutch company behind the Kapamilya network's "Pinoy Big Brother."

'We're flattered that other networks are eyeing 'Idol' contestants'

The source said several Kapamilya employees had gone to see one of the "Idol" judges to convince the judge to "just let (some of) the contestants go."

Contract issue

"There is no issue there," Intalan said of the contestant's transfer. "The contract that applicants signed states that once they come on board, they must stay on board unless they decide to back out from the contest. But the reason should not be because they are moving to another competition."

Meanwhile, the season's top 24 contenders were chosen on Thursday after the scheduled three-day theater auditions conducted by judges Pilita Corrales, Ryan Cayabyab and Francis Magalona at the Zuellard Center of the Philippines in Pasay City. The signals the beginning of live performances and voting

ABS-CBN 11

NOT an entirely amiable job for judges (from left) Mr. C, Pilita Corrales and Francis M

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4) In the TV Series, who played the part of Isabella, the woman Sonny Crockett married?
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ABC 5 ex

new directors make their mark

malaya lolas hanging homers, primarily because we wanted to see how this year's new directors did.

We were gratified to conclude that most of them did well, and we hoped that mainstream producers agreed enough to give them so many follow-up features to the movie is coming.

In one remarkable view, the best direction was turned in by Ron Bregard in "Romeo," because he kept a firm hand on the complex tale and for many lovely swarming silhouettes and characters.

That definitely isn't easy, so Bregard should be credited for his work in "Romeo," while a much more humble credit than his rendering of "Barjada" in last year's Cinemalaya film fest.

So, when Bregard did win the 2006 competition's nod in Best Director, we felt vindicated in our choice.

What about the other new directors? The second best director, in our opinion, was Adolf Alix Jr. ("Sisterakas"). Indeed his staging and use of camera were fluid and logical.

His integration of underwater shots into his film was also done in natural manner, and he elicited fine performances from Sid Lucero and Iza Calzado.

Third best new director in our view was Mike Sandejas, who mugged the midriff tones and complex "Tulad ng Dati." He admired his daring, and he did pull off most of the movie's scenes.

But he did go overboard at times, especially during the film's final fourth section, which was a surfeit of musical numbers and turgid acting.

Be that as it may, Sandejas' directorial work was impressive and should be noted as one of the features' best ("Tulad ng Dati," in fact, were the top three Palanca winners).

Finally, we want to cite Bangi Garcia for his handling of "Batad, Sa Isang Salog." Although his film was visually limited (for many small scenes, not enough visual splendor), Garcia's sensitivity and deep appreciation of ethnic traditions enriched his production, and made it a quietly significant viewing experience, especially for southern urbanites who have lost their essential sense of self.

We trust that this year's batch of new Cinemalaya directors will continue to fulfill their potential, and make more human films that will humanize and vivify the heart and soul of the Filipino experience.

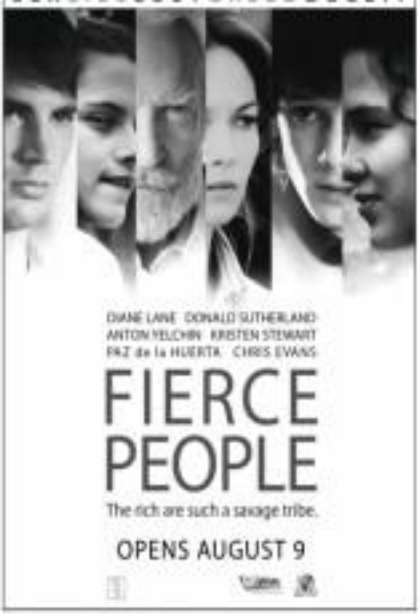
VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

DID YOU KNOW...

WASHINGTON—MACAULAY CULKIN, BEST REMEMBERED FOR HIS movies in "Home Alone," will star in a dark comedy about a couple facing sex problems, the industry newspaper Variety has reported. Mike Newhouse's movie, "Sex and Breakfast," has the couple following the advice of a therapist who espouses group sex as a cure-all.

"I love the script," Culkin, 26, told Variety. He hasn't starred in a movie since 2004, when he was nabbed for possession of marijuana. He did a few mini-movies between 1998 and 1999...for $600 each. AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

CHRISTOPHER Walken, left, plays an enigmatic salesman to Adam's everyman.

Humor malfunctions in Sandler's latest film

By Oliver M. Palomboch
Contributor

AS AS ADAM SANDLER COMEDY, "CLICK" can be categorized alongside the more inane ones in his filmography, like "Happy Gilmore" and "Bulgy Mongoolooie." The laughs are random but "Click," too, which centers on workaholic architect Michael Newman (Sandler), who uses a super remote created to make his harried life easier. But it's a one-joke movie that's stretched far beyond its limits. The lowbrow humor doesn't always get its desired reaction as Sandler's dumber films might guarantee. But the occasional laughs and the film's bigger family drama aspect (mostly don't, mostly) click.

However, it brings together actors that one wouldn't normally see together in a movie with Sandler. It's quite amazing to see Christopher Walken in the outgoing-to-a-extreme Morty, the guy who gives Michael the universal remote. There's lovely Kate Beckinsale, who temporarily ditches her recognizable tough-looking heroine role to play a housewife and mother of two. And while it's not exactly surprising to see David Hasselhoff here, his goofy turn as Michael's infuriating playboy boss is much appreciated.

The story, while somewhat fly-by-the-seat-of-its-pants, also possesses some charm. Once Michael discovers the remote's perks (but his powerful gadget allows, he becomes a radically changed man, emotionally that is—watching himself through endless but meaningful moments of his life with his family. But when the story becomes redundantly sentimental and overdone, the message becomes muddled, and feels misplaced in the whole deal.

Typical structure

It's wise to say at beginnings where the gimmick remote magnifies in Michael's future, so whatever feel-good expectations one might have during the movie's first half get dampened. It also becomes incredibly dubious, if it weren't already, when Morty's identity is explained here. But when the story becomes hopelessly hokey and mushy, it chronic itself up, and not in any way that you'd expect. While some will feel cheated that the script pulled such a stunt near the end, it all boils down to this: is situation—that it said is just another incompetent, family-aimed flick that penalizes in the dumb.

Sandler familiarly amuses his fans and sells what he's selling (easy, and it ridiculously hyper, as usual. That's pretty much what you get here: just throw in some horny dogs, some retarded-guy grunts humor, and Gran Astin is a spastic, for good measure. Well, it certainly isn't the cleverest and rarest "50 First Dates," or the nostalgic guilty pleasure "Wedding Singer," but "Click" still follows the typical Sandler-driven structure, in that he's also would-be fans who gets wounded in the end.

It only we had a super-natural control to get in the few, funny parts.

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